MR. SCROOGE

A PLAY

ASHLEY MILLER

MR. SCROOGE

A Dramatization of Dickens' "A Christmas Carol"

By ASHLEY MILLER

With diagrams for staging and illustrations

CHARLES DICKENS' "Christmas Carol" is probably the greatest Christmas story in our literature. This volume presents the story of Scrooge and the three Christmas spirits in dramatic form, introducing the outstanding characters which appear in the original and preserving its atmosphere—often indeed, its actual words. The dramatization has been especially prepared with an eye to amateur or semi-professional acting and the author has not only kept the mechanical and property requirements as simple as possible with this in view, but has also included many practical suggestions from his own experience in producing the play.

To Bacone College
from Te Ata
and Clyde Fisher

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MR. SCROOGE

CHRISTMAS AT THE FEZZIWIGS

MR. SCROOGE

A Dramatic Fantasy after CHARLES DICKENS' "A Christmas Carol" *by* ASHLEY MILLER

With some of the original illustrations by
JOHN LYNCH

New York : DODD, MEAD & COMPANY

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FOREWORD

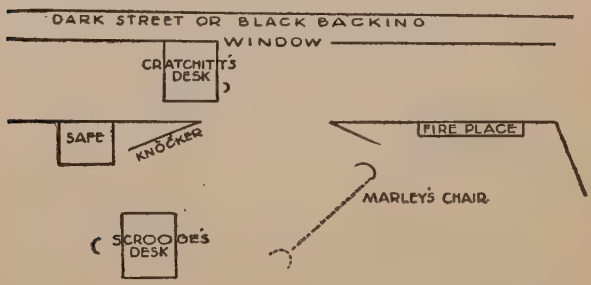
In this dramatization the attempt has been made to provide an actable version of "A Christmas Carol" and at the same time to keep the wonderful quality of the Dickens' story without unnecessary changes or interpolations. Owing to the length, variety of incident and the many changes of scene the task was not simple, but the production of "Mr. Scrooge" by the Players at the Heckscher Theatre in New York, seems to demonstrate that most of these requirements have been successfully fulfilled.

A little history of that presentation may be useful to those who intend to use the play in amateur production.

In the matter of costumes: the Players found that all the principal characters required careful and correct dressing of the period and the well-known illustrations were used as a guide. These costumes were rented from a regular theatrical costumer. In the visions, however, it proved practicable to dress the guests and smaller roles in modified modern attire. The girls wore long skirts, and kerchiefs or tight-fitting bodices, the boys long trousers and mod-

ern coats to which an Eton collar and cuffs gave quite a Dickensonian effect. This simple device cut the costume rental fully 60%, and in the candle-lighted scenes was excellent.

The first act setting at the Heckscher varied from that given in the prompt book and may possibly afford an easy alternate. It showed Scrooge's office nearest the footlights and Bob Cratchitt's at the back, as in the following diagram:

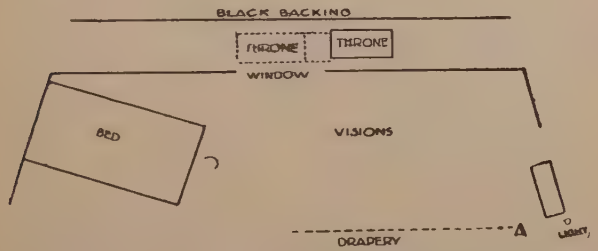


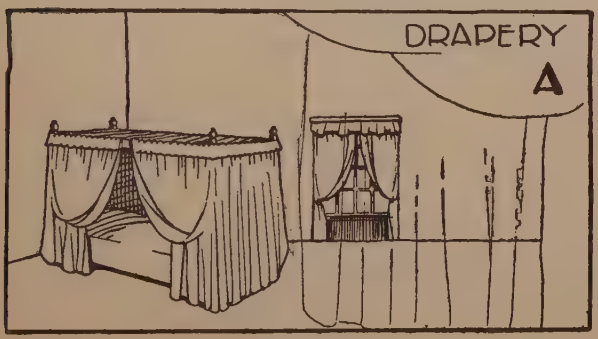
The famous knocker was on the door nearest Scrooge's desk and the face of Marley was thrown on it from a toy movie-projector, behind the books on this desk. As Scrooge blew out the candle just before this, the face was plainly seen in the darkened office.

Marley's ghost, in this production, was lighted by a small green spot-light in the footlights. He was seated exactly centre and for simplicity made his entrance through the centre

arch, so that this light was always on him. (Incidentally, Marley's chain was hung with wooden blocks, 6 inches long, attached by hook-eyes and painted to represent ledgers, cash boxes and safes. The chain itself made sufficient "clanking").

The second act is, of course, the most difficult but we had no waits or lapses and the effects were easily managed. The diagram shows the arrangement used at the Heckscher Theatre.





The drapery A, was used between the vision and, as all the light was concentrated on "Scrooge," who remained right centre during these changes, its falling and raising were hardly noticeable. This lighting is, however, important. The Spirit gets sufficient light from "Scrooge's" spot or flood light and the very low footlights. The visions were all lighted as if by candlelight. This was furnished by a single 60 watt drop-light or bulb off Left which was turned on *after* the drapery is raised and cut off *before* it is lowered, then giving the effect of a "dark change" and making the drapery more nearly invisible. It thus became merely a screen for the changes of furniture and properties.

The lighting of the Spirit in this act was simplified by concealing an ordinary Ever-ready flash-light in his cornucopia. By holding this with the large end up, his face was illuminated from below and a very good effect obtained.

The throne was, of course, on a platform together with all its decorations and when Scrooge closed the window curtains before retiring it was wheeled into place and a rosy light thrown on it at the proper cue. The curtains were opened by cords running off to the wings.

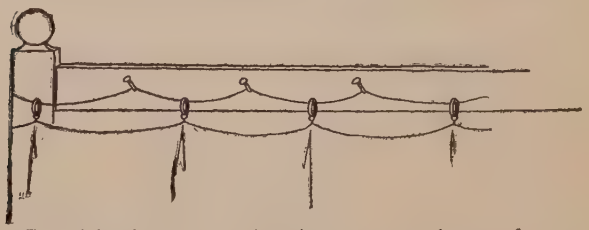
It will be found that the manuscript provides, in all cases, dialogue or business sufficient to fill the time required for the Spirits' changes of dress, as well as for the change of furniture and backgrounds for the visions. We used a plain wall in Scrooge's room so that it would serve as an unobtrusive background for all of the visions except the parting with his fiancé. For this a "wood-wing" and a garden bench were put in place.

The hooded Spirit of Christmas Yet-to-come was kept in the shadow, and all sidelight shielded so as not to shine on him. This added a mystery that helped the effect considerably.

The figure of the dead man on the bed was put in place before the act began and the bed curtains closed until Scrooge himself pulls them aside at the Spirits' bidding. To avoid any possible movement of this figure, we did not—as planned—use one of the Players but built up the shape from pillows and rolled blankets. In the very subdued light of these scenes this is effective even when the curtains are torn down by the Charwoman.

The curtains themselves were held in place by a small cord run through the rings and over small brads in the upper batten. This cord

broke at the first quick pull of the Charwoman.



In this last act, having a number of extra small boys in the membership, it seemed a good plan to break Scrooge's long opening scene by bringing the boy up from the street. Scrooge accordingly called him and gave him all directions, addresses and money on the stage. This has several advantages and has been omitted in the manuscript only to save one salary.

This entire last act proved to be full of comedy and in the playing brought almost continuous laughter and applause. The bewilderment and apprehension of both the gentleman and Bob Cratchitt over Scrooge's seeming sudden madness are worth careful rehearsing, as much depends on facial expression and by-play.

For Scrooge's final entrance, he was provided with as large a Christmas tree as would come through the door, several wreaths and one very long stretch of ground pine. The management of the latter, entanglement in it, jumping over it and draping it over bed and furni-

ture lifted the fun and jollity of the scene to great heights. We used about 25 feet in one long piece and Scrooge's eager desire to be at both sides of the room at once, to supervise the work of decorating, proved great fun. Care should be taken not to drop the tempo of this last scene by attempting to place the greens too precisely. By specific direction in advance as to just who is to place each wreath or green and who to loop the long ground pine, it can all be done inside of 15 seconds and without losing the excitement and vitality of the situation.

Those who, like the writer, know and love these delightful folk of Dickens' creation will find real joy in this play and in its presentation. It should be considered a great privilege to meet and become well acquainted with such charming people and how better than by becoming identified with them through the player's art?

The author hopes that the play may be the means of spreading abroad a greater measure of the joy with which the story itself is suffused and add to the spirit of understanding and sympathy for other folks.

Perhaps it may be the theatre's part in the reconstruction of human consciousness now taking place to demonstrate the very practical val-

ues of this love as the one sure way to the long sought peace on earth.

And so with "Tiny Tim" we'll say "God Bless us, everyone!"

CHARACTERS

MR. EBENEEZER SCROOGE, a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner.
FRED, his nephew, betrothed to Nell.
BOB CRATCHIT, his clerk.
TOPPER, in love with Dolly.
A GENTLEMAN, soliciting subscriptions to the poor fund.
TINY TIM, Bob Cratchit's son.
MRS. CRATCHIT, Bob's wife.
MARTHA, his daughter.
NELL, affianced to Fred.
DOLLY, in love with Topper.

Additional Characters in the Visions

MARLEY'S GHOST.
THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS, appearing as Past, Present and Future.
OLD FEZZIWIG.
THE UNDERTAKER'S MAN.
SCROOGE'S FORMER FIANCE.
THE CHARWOMAN, and LITTLE FAN, Scrooge's sister.

Non-speaking Parts

MRS. FEZZIWIG.
DICK, Scrooge's former fellow apprentice.
THE CHILDREN, Want and Ignorance.
GUESTS at the various parties.

Total of seventeen speaking parts and ten others.

ILLUSTRATIONS

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MR. SCROOGE

Act One

ACT ONE

SCENE: *The office of Ebenezer Scrooge. The stage is divided into two rooms, the R. side being the private office of Scrooge and being connected with the L. half of the stage (the main office) by a door, on which is a large brass knocker. In the private office is Scrooge's desk—a large flat table—a small safe at back, chairs and beside the open fire at extreme R., a coal scuttle.*

In the outer office is a high desk with a high stool, both set about C. The door leading to the street is in the back flat at the L. There is a window in the back flat in both rooms and an invisible door in the L. wing, through which the Ghost of Marley enters. Just below this door is the fireplace, in which a tiny fire is smouldering.

AT RISE: *Bob Cratchit is discovered working upon the books at the high desk in the outer office. He shivers, looks up, steals a look at the distant coal scuttle in the inner office, shakes his head, blows on his hands, tries to warm them at the candle (it is late afternoon),*

gets down from the stool and after looking at the coal scuttle and his dismal fire, puts on his big white comforter and again goes to work. There is a sound of sleigh bells at intervals in the street outside. Bob shivers too much to work, even to hold the pen and again gets down and after two or three furtive glances and false starts, he takes his shovel and goes toward the coal box in the inner office. A sound at the street door makes him slide back to his high seat, looking rather guilty, as the door opens and lets in Scrooge's nephew, Fred, a wholesome, hearty, good feeling fellow, who is followed by his fiancée, and Topper, another young man who brings his fiancée also. The Girls, both pretty, are Nell and Dolly. This party is in high spirits, evidently also impressed with the fact that they are in the dreadful Scrooge's office.

FRED.

(*As they enter, laughingly.*)

Hush! Hush, all of you!

(*Whispering to Bob.*)

Is—is Mr. Scrooge within?

BOB.

No, sir. But I expect him back at any time, sir.

FRED.

Well then I'll take this noisy crowd away and come back on my way home.

NELL.

(*To the rest.*)

Shall we be "taken" away? Let us assert our rights.

TOPPER.

(*In a profound basso.*)

No. Let's be discreet—until we get him in the snow outside.

DOLLY.

I'm *really* frightened. Suppose Mr. Scrooge should come. Do let us go.

FRED.

Come, then. Wait, I'll see if the ogre approaches.

(*He looks out the door.*)

No. All is safe. Come out!

(*He exits, holding out his hand for Nell, who joins him, Topper and Dolly following. Topper is seen to pick up snow to throw at Fred as Bob closes the door. When their laughter has died away, Bob returns to his work, but being evidently encouraged by the call of the young people, he bravely takes the*

shovel and is again just starting for the coal when the door opens once more, to admit his Wife and Tiny Tim, who walks with crutches. Bob runs to greet them lovingly. Mrs. Cratchit is a wholesome young matron, evidently more ready to smile than to frown and, like Bob, at heart a true optimist.)

BOB.

(*As he sees them.*)

Why, my dears. Whatever brings *you* here?

MRS. CRATCHIT.

(*Kissing him.*)

Part of the reason is a secret between Tiny Tim and me, but part of it is to beg you to ask Mr. Scrooge for the whole day off tomorrow and to come home early tonight. It's Christmas Eve and so I'm sure he can't refuse.

BOB.

(*Putting forward a chair for her, dubiously.*)

I—I—don't know, but—

(*Hopefully.*)

We'll *hope* he can't. You must not be disappointed though if I am late, for Mr. Scrooge doesn't believe in Christmas very much—

TINY TIM.

(*From the fireplace L.*)

Not believe in Christmas!

MRS. CRATCHIT.
(*Quickly.*)

Your father only means that Mr. Scrooge believes more in work than in holidays, Tiny Tim.

BOB.

Yes. That's the idea. However, I'll try and I'll do my best, dear.
(*He looks apprehensively at the street door.*)
And now I think—

MRS. CRATCHIT.

Yes, I know, Bob. We'll go at once, but—
(*Suddenly.*)
Aren't you cold here? Why, you have no fire at all. Why don't you put on some coal?

BOB.
(*Aside to her.*)

Don't let the child know, dear. Mr. Scrooge keeps the coal in his own office and—
(*He hesitates.*)

MRS. CRATCHIT.

And I understand. But you can't work when you are cold.
(*She rises and starts toward the coal scuttle.*)

BOB.

No, please. I—I was just going to get some

when you came in, and I promise I will do so just as soon as you are gone.

TINY TIM.

(*From the fireplace.*)

It is cold here, father.

BOB.

Yes. And so you and your mother had better run along. I will build up the fire at once.

MRS. CRATCHIT.

I wish you could find another employer, Bob. One who would appreciate you as—

BOB.

(*Gaily.*)

As you do? I never expect such fortune as that.

(*He smiles lovingly at her.*)

MRS. CRATCHIT.

No, but one who is at least human and who wouldn't try to get the most for the least wages.

(*Bob motions warningly to Tiny Tim.*)

Yes, I know, but it is hard. For you are so kind and good about it all that it does seem as if Mr. Scrooge might forget his worship of money just long enough to think of you some times.

BOB.

I do try to be faithful. And I do try to work hard and without shirking.

MRS. CRATCHIT.

As if I didn't know that.

BOB.

And sometimes I am almost angry that there seems so little hope for just honest work. Why does Heaven give other men the power to withhold or bestow.

MRS. CRATCHIT.

I don't believe it's Heaven's way, Bob, at all. It's *man's.*

BOB.

It's not for myself, but you—and Tiny Tim needs surgery and medicine. It's not for myself. (*He turns away and puts his hand to his eyes.*)

MRS. CRATCHIT.

I know, Cratchit. But we must have patience. It—it will all come right. There, there!

(*She pats his shoulders.*)

BOB.

(*Changing quickly to very obvious cheerfulness.*)

Of course—of course, I *know* that. It *will* all come right.

MRS. CRATCHIT.

There then, we'll go. Come, Tiny Tim.
(*Tim comes to her and Bob opens the door for them.*)

BOB.

(*Apologetically.*)

It's only that I must not waste the time that my employer pays me for, pleasant though it be. Some day, when I have an office of my own—

(*He stops for he honestly knows that such a day will never come. Mrs. Cratchit knows it too, but she pretends and repeats cheerily "Yes, some day." Bob kisses them both and opens the door.*)

Good-bye.

TINY TIM.

(*Hobbling out first.*)

Good-bye, father.

MRS. CRATCHIT.

(*Following him.*)

Good-bye and remember to come home early tonight and to ask Mr. Scrooge for *all* the day tomorrow.

BOB.

(*Detaining her to whisper.*)

How has he seemed today, better?

(*She looks out at Tiny Tim without speaking and so Bob goes on, bravely.*)

He is getting strong and hearty—

(*His voice breaks and he turns away.*)

MRS. CRATCHIT.

(*Quick to feel for him.*)

Yes, indeed.

(*Brightly.*)

He told me, coming here, that he hoped the people saw him this Christmas Eve, because he was a cripple and it might be pleasant to them to remember who made lame beggars to walk and blind men to see.

TINY TIM.

(*Outside on the pavement.*)

Are you coming, mother?

MRS. CRATCHIT.

(*Starting.*)

Yes, Tiny Tim.

(*She squeezes Bob's hand reassuringly but their eyes do not meet. She goes, Bob closes the door and then wipes his eyes.*)

BOB.

(*To himself, after a pause.*)

Come, come, Bob Cratchit!

(*He dries his eyes.*)

There. Why, this is Christmas Eve and no time for tears.

(*He goes back to his stool and it grows dark gradually outside the windows. He shivers, tries warming his hands at the candle again and then, remembering his promise, gets bravely down, takes the shovel and, going into the inner sanctum, gets a large shovelful of coal. He carries it to the door, stops, goes back and empties half of it into the box again. Then he proceeds toward his own fire. When he is just in front of the street door it opens and Scrooge himself enters. He looks at Bob quickly as he passes him and goes into the inner room. Bob stealthily lays down the shovel and resumes his work quietly in the hope that Scrooge had not noticed. But as soon as he is seated the dry, hard, quiet voice of Scrooge cuts the air.*)

SCROOGE.

(*At his desk, as if half to himself.*)

I predict that it will be necessary for us to part unless you can get along without wasting coal.

(*Bob makes no reply and there is a pause, while Scrooge sorts some papers. Then he goes on inexorably.*)

Put back the coal in the coal box.

(*And goes on with his work while Bob does as told.*)

There are a great many clerks who would like to have your place.

BOB.

(*Having been stopped at the door by this speech.*)

Yes, sir. I'm very sorry, sir.

(*Scrooge making no further comment, Bob goes back to his desk. A pause.*)

SCROOGE.

Did you notify Duggins that his rent was raised?

BOB.

(*Getting down and coming to the door of the private office.*)

Yes, sir. He thought it very hard, sir.

SCROOGE.

(*Dryly.*)

Good.

BOB.

And—he—

SCROOGE.

(*Calmly interrupting.*)

Called me a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, eh?

(*Bob coughs apologetically.*)

Good!

(*There is a pause and Bob turns, Scrooge stops him.*)

Don't move when I am talking to you. I said "Good"! That is the very thing I like. You need not trouble to defend me or try to correct any such ideas. They save me the annoyance of listening to whining and entreaties from people who can't pay.

BOB.

Very well, sir. And old Mrs. Burden has been here twice—

SCROOGE.

(*Without looking up at any time.*)

Well? You told her that I would give her till Friday?

(*Bob doesn't answer, a pause.*)

Well?

(*Another pause.*)

Did you?

BOB.

(*Reluctantly.*)

Yes, sir. But—

SCROOGE.

But you promised to try to get the time extended. You may save your breath. Notify the bailiff tomorrow.

BOB.

Tomorrow? Tomorrow is—Christmas day, sir, and—

SCROOGE.

Bah! Christmas day! I think the laws remain in force and attend to business, as I do, on Christmas day!

(*Scornfully.*)

You may go to your work.

(*Bob does so. There is a sound of sleigh bells outside and of the laughing voices of a group that passes, calling out "Good night," and "Merry Christmas" as if parting at a corner. Scrooge glances up, resumes work, stops again, says "BAH"! and again resumes. The street door opens again and Fred reappears. He nods to Bob, and goes into Scrooge's office directly, calling out blithely.*)

FRED.

A Merry Christmas, Uncle, God save you!

(*There is a calm pause and then Scrooge deliberately looks at him, back at his papers and remarks sharply.*)

SCROOGE.

Bah! Humbug!

FRED.

(*Returning to the charge, good-humoredly.*)

Christmas a humbug, Uncle? You don't mean that, I'm sure.

SCROOGE.
(*Curtly.*)

I do.

(*A pause.*)

Bah!

(*He tries to resume work but stops and returns to the subject.*)

Merry Christmas! What right have you to be merry?

(*With a grunt.*)

You're poor enough.

FRED.
(*Smiling.*)

Come then, what right have you to be dismal? You're rich enough.

SCROOGE.

(*Not finding really good answer to this, after a pause, says.*)

Bah!

(*Picks up papers, stops and says.*)

Humbug!

(*Takes his pen and works.*)

FRED.

Don't be cross, Uncle, I—

SCROOGE.
(*Interrupting.*)

What else can I be when I live in such a world of fools as this? Merry Christmas. Out upon Merry Christmas! What's Christmas time to you but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older and not an hour richer; a time for balancing your books and having every item in 'em through a round dozen of months presented dead against you?

(*Fred stands smiling at this tirade, Scrooge looking up and seeing this, goes on more angrily.*)

If I could have my way every idiot who goes around with Merry Christmas on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding and buried with a stake of Holly through his heart! He should!

FRED.
(*Protesting.*)

Uncle!

SCROOGE.
(*Mocking him.*)

Nephew!

(*He turns to his desk.*)

Keep Christmas in your own way and let me keep it in mine.

FRED.

Keep it? But you don't keep it.

SCROOGE.

(*Without looking up.*)

Let me leave it alone then. Much good may it do you.

(*A pause.*)

Much good has it ever done you.

FRED.

(*Soberly at first.*)

There are many things from which I might have had good, by which I haven't profited, I dare say, Christmas among the rest. But—

(*He leans on a chair back and goes on half to himself, lovingly.*)

But I have always thought of Christmas apart from the veneration due its sacred name and origin—if anything belonging to it can be apart from that—as a good time, a kind, charitable, pleasant time. The only time I know of in all the long calendar of the year when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely and to think of people below them as if they were really fellow travellers and not another race of beings, bound on other journeys.

(*He grows enthusiastic.*)

And therefore, Uncle,

(*He comes to the desk and looks down at Scrooge who has unconsciously stopped work.*) though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that it has done me good and will do me good and therefore, I say, God bless it.

(*Bob Cratchit, who has listened, forgetfully breaks into applause. Scrooge looks up. Bob blushes and getting down pokes his small fire so vigorously that it goes out. When he is quiet again, Scrooge remarks.*)

SCROOGE.

Let me hear another sound from you and you'll keep your Christmas by losing your situation.

(*He turns to Fred, sarcastically.*)

You are quite a powerful speaker, sir. I wonder you don't go into parliament.

FRED.

Don't be angry, Uncle. Come, dine with us tomorrow.

SCROOGE.

(*As if not hearing aright.*)

Us?

FRED.

The lady whom I am to marry—when I have a sufficient income—sends you this invitation

by me. Another Christmas I hope to ask you to dine in my own house.

SCROOGE.
(*Ironically.*)

Your salary has been advanced, then?

FRED.
(*Quietly.*)

I hope it will be the coming year. We have waited a long time now. Will you dine with us?

SCROOGE.

I'll see you in—

FRED.
(*Interrupting.*)

Uncle. But why?

SCROOGE.
(*Exasperated.*)

Why should you marry?

FRED.

Because I've fallen in love.

SCROOGE.

(*Put beyond the power of speech almost, by this folly.*)

Because you have fallen in love.

(*He gives it up and resumes work.*)

Good afternoon.

FRED.

Nay, Uncle. Why give that as a reason?

SCROOGE.

(*Politely.*)

Good afternoon.

FRED.

I want nothing from you. I ask nothing of you. Why cannot we be friends?

SCROOGE.

(*Placidly.*)

Good afternoon.

FRED.

(*After a pause.*)

I am sorry, with all my heart, to find you so resolute. But I have made this trial in homage to Christmas and I'll keep my Christmas humor to the last. So—a Merry Christmas, Uncle!

SCROOGE.

Good afternoon.

FRED.

And a Happy New Year.

SCROOGE.

Good afternoon.

(*He will not look up, so Fred, after a pause, goes out, stopping to speak to Bob outside.*)

FRED.

A Merry Christmas to you, Cratchit.

BOB.

Thank you, sir, very kindly, and a Merry Christmas to *you.*

(*They shake hands and Fred exits with a parting smile and nod to Bob.*)

SCROOGE.

(*To himself, with a hopeless look.*)

Another fool. A clerk with fifteen shillings a week and a family, talking about Merry Christmas. I'll retire to Bedlam.

(*The street door opens and a kindly, well-dressed Gentleman enters, Bob gets down from his stool but the gentleman smiles and passes on to Scrooge's office, saying to Bob as he passes.*)

GENTLEMAN.

Scrooge and Marley's, I believe.

BOB.

(*Half-starting to prevent his interruption of Scrooge.*)

Yes, sir, may—

GENTLEMAN.

(*Stepping into the inner office and smilingly addressing Scrooge.*)

Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge or Mr. Marley?

SCROOGE.

(*Looks up, calmly surveys his visitor, resumes work, saying as he dots an "i."*)

Mr. Marley has been dead these seven years.

(*The Gentleman coughs.*)

He died seven years ago this very night.

GENTLEMAN.

We have no doubt his liberality is well represented by his surviving partner.

SCROOGE.

(*Grimly.*)

It certainly is.

GENTLEMAN.

(*Heartily.*)

Good.

(*He holds out a subscription paper but Scrooge fails to take it, so the gentleman goes on.*)

At this season of the year, Mr. Scrooge, this Christmas season, it is more than usually desirable that we should make some effort to aid the poor and destitute. Many are in want

of the common necessities, hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts, sir.

SCROOGE.

(*For the first time looking up, slowly.*)

Are there no prisons?

GENTLEMAN.

(*Gently, after a pause.*)

Plenty of prisons.

SCROOGE.

(*As though in doubt, mockingly.*)

And the union workhouses, are they still in operation?

GENTLEMAN.

They are, still. I wish I could say that they were not.

SCROOGE.

(*As if relieved.*)

Ah. And—the Treadmill and the poor law are in full vigor?

GENTLEMAN.

(*Sadly.*)

Both very busy, sir.

SCROOGE.

(*Preparing to resume work again.*)

Oh. I was afraid from what you said that

something had occurred to stop them in their useful course.

(*He resumes writing.*)

I am very glad.

GENTLEMAN.

(*Warmly.*)

Under the impression that these things scarcely furnish Christmas cheer, a few of us are trying to raise a fund to buy the poor some food and means of warmth. We choose this time because it is the time of all others when want is most keenly felt and when abundance rejoices. What shall I put you down for?

(*He takes up a pen.*)

SCROOGE.

(*Studying his books.*)

Nothing.

GENTLEMAN.

You wish to be anonymous?

SCROOGE.

I wish to be left alone, since you ask what I wish, sir. I don't make merry myself at Christmas time and I can't afford to make idle people merry. I help to support the establishments I have mentioned. They cost enough, and those who are badly off must go there.

GENTLEMAN.

Many can't go there, and many would rather die.

SCROOGE.

If they would rather die, they had better do it and reduce the surplus population. Most poor men have larger families than they should. Besides—this is not my business. And I find mine occupies me constantly. Good afternoon.

GENTLEMAN.

(*After an instant, evidently deciding to say his say.*)

Pardon my insistence. But *isn't* the welfare of other men your business?

SCROOGE.

(*Perfectly dazed by such an idea.*)

Eh? No, of course not.

GENTLEMAN.

And yet, if that idea were followed out, if all men held aloof each from the other, the business of life would stand still. Suppose all men held your views—

SCROOGE.

(*Stiffly.*)

It is not supposable, sir.

GENTLEMAN.

Why, the whole fabric of civilization is built upon the principle that men are brothers and must live together and work together.

SCROOGE.

Good afternoon. I am not my brother's keeper.

(He returns to his work and the Gentleman after a pause goes slowly out. Bob opens the street door for him and the Gentleman wishes him a "Merry Christmas" as he exits.)

(As soon as the door has closed Scrooge lays down his pen and rubs his hands together in satisfaction.)

Hummm! That was better.

(He almost smiles and Bob seeing that he is, for him, in good humor starts to make his request. He goes to the door when a Small Boy outside puts his face against the window and starts to sing "God Bless you, Merry Gentlemen," at sound of which Scrooge half-rises and reaches for a ruler. The Boy promptly disappears and Bob as promptly goes back to work.)

SCROOGE.

Cratchit!

(Bob again comes to his door.)

Do you see a knocker on that door?

BOB.

(*Looking at the knocker.*)

Yes, sir.

SCROOGE.

Good.

(*A pause.*)

I was afraid I was mistaken as you failed to use it before allowing the gentleman who has just favored me with a call to enter. The knocker was put there for use, you'll remember.

BOB.

I am very sorry, sir.

(*Scrooge resumes work and Bob retires to his desk. Again the sound of laughter and voices outside, calls of the link boys whose flaming torches cast a flare on the windows. The clock in a neighboring church tower strikes six and Scrooge reluctantly lays down his pen.*)

SCROOGE.

It is six o'clock.

(*Bob gets down from his stool and takes his cap from the peg behind it. Then he turns to Scrooge, hesitates, then comes to the inner door to make his request for the holiday.*)

(*Without looking up, grunts.*)

You want to ask for all day tomorrow, I suppose.

BOB.

If quite convenient, sir.

(*He shifts uneasily from one foot to the other.*)

SCROOGE.

It's not convenient, and it's not fair. If I were to stop a half-a-crown for it you'd think yourself ill used I'll be bound.

(*Bob tries to smile faintly.*)

And yet you don't think me ill used when I pay a day's wages for no work.

BOB.

(*Apologetically.*)

It's only once a year, sir.

SCROOGE.

A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket once every twenty-fifth of December.

(*He straightens up to button his coat.*)

You may have the whole day—

BOB.

(*Interrupting.*)

Thank you, sir—

SCROOGE.

(*Calmly.*)

—after you have posted up those accounts I spoke of this morning. Be here early and you can finish early.

BOB.

(*Rather thankful for so much.*)

Yes, sir. Thank you, sir.

(*He goes to the door, hesitates, then says.*)

Good night, sir—

(*Opens the street door, again hesitates, then.*)

—and a Merry Chr—

(*Scrooge looks up sharply with a "Bah," and Bob exits quickly with a)* "Yes, sir. Good night, sir."

(*Wrapping the ends of his comforter about him to take the place of a top-coat as he disappears.*)

SCROOGE.

(*Begins to gather up his papers and goes to his safe when a second face appears at the window and a piping voice starts again "God save you, Merry Gentlemen" an operation that is as before broken off short by Scrooge's reaching for the ruler in a threatening manner. He next locks his safe and muttering scornfully to himself, "A Merry Christmas," puts on his great coat and takes down his hat. Again he mutters, "Bah," and after a pause, "Humbug." A Third Voice at the key-hole this time starts the same "God save you, etc.," and this*

time Scrooge throws the ruler toward the sound. Then he puts on his hat, blows out the candle and starts for the door. As he is just before it, the knocker, which is quite visible to him as to the audience (being placed on the door so that when open—it opens up stage—it is directly in view), suddenly this knocker glows out in the dusk, showing instead of a plain knocker, the face of a man. Scrooge starts back, passes his hand across his brow and mutters "Marley!" Instantly the face is gone. Scrooge lights the candle and carefully examines the knocker on both sides of the door. Then he mutters, "Humbug!" again, blows out the candle and again starts to leave the inner office. Again the face glows out, like a shifting light on the door and again he stops more in a kind of angry annoyance than in fear. While he looks at it the face fades away. Then in the dim light an old bell hanging over the street door begins to swing, softly at first and then more loudly. Scrooge unconsciously falls back a little. A sudden silence falls and there is a distinct pause, long enough for Scrooge to say "Humbug!" again. The word seems almost a signal, for a clanking sound as of a heavy chain begins to be heard in the distance. It draws nearer and nearer. Scrooge steps softly over and closes

the inner office door, stopping first to be sure that Marley's face is not where the knocker should be. He locks the door, himself inside. Hardly is this done when through the side wall (at left) in the outer office, the Ghost of Marley enters, "Marley in his pig-tail, usual waistcoat, tights and boots." Scrooge stands in the inner office, listening and trying to believe that he does not believe. As he hears the clank of the chain in the outer office he asserts to himself, but more faintly, "It's humbug still. I won't believe it." He retreats however when, right through the closed and locked door, the Ghost of Marley enters and stands facing him. The long chain which the Ghost wears about its waist, and which drags behind it, is made of cash boxes, ledgers, small iron safes, etc., and its figure is lighted by small green electric lights, so hidden in its clothing as to throw a weird light up into its face from below. After a brief pause, Scrooge asks rather huskily but still in his hard way. "How now, Marley, what do you want with me?" The sentence ends rather feebly in spite of Scrooge.)

GHOST.

(In a hollow, unnatural and hardly audible bass.)

MUCH, EBENEZER! MUCH!

SCROOGE.
(*To himself, dryly.*)

Marley's voice, no doubt about it.
(*To Ghost as if pretending he doesn't know.*)
Who are you?

GHOST.
(*After a pause, slowly.*)
Ask me who I *was*.

SCROOGE.
(*Elaborately.*)

Who *were* you, then? You are particular to a shade—
(*Half to himself.*)
I mean *for* a shade.

GHOST.

In life I was your partner. Jacob Marley.
(*Scrooge mechanically holds out his hand, but recollecting himself pulls it back quickly and hesitatingly says.*)

SCROOGE.
Will you—er—can you sit down?

GHOST.
(*Sepulchrally.*)

I can.

SCROOGE.

(*Glad to break the spell by doing something, gets chair which he places L. of the desk, saying.*)

Do it then.

(*The Ghost sits and Scrooge goes round and sits on the opposite side of the desk.*)

GHOST.

(*When both are seated.*)

You don't believe in me.

SCROOGE.

(*Admitting the fact.*)

I don't.

GHOST.

Why do you doubt your senses?

SCROOGE.

Because a little thing affects them. A slight disorder of the stomach makes them cheats. You may be a bit of undigested beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese or a fragment of under-done potato.

(*As the Ghost makes no reply, he adds nervously.*)

There's more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are.

(*The Ghost turns its glassy eyes on Scrooge slowly, seeing which Scrooge again tries to cover his nervousness by speech.*)

You see this toothpick?

(*He holds one up.*)

GHOST.

(*Looking at Scrooge himself.*)

I do.

SCROOGE.

(*Vainly trying to hold the toothpick in line of the Ghost's gaze.*)

You're not looking at it.

GHOST.

(*Hollowly.*)

But I see it never-the-less.

SCROOGE.

(*Unsatisfied but going on.*)

Well. I have but to swallow this, and be for the rest of my days persecuted by a legion of goblins, all of my own creation. It's humbug, I tell you. Humbug!

(*At this the Ghost rises slowly and emits such a fearsome cry, accompanied by the clanking of its chain, that Scrooge throws himself on his knees before it, crying.*)

Mercy! Dreadful apparition! Mercy!

(*When the Ghost is again silent, Scrooge asks almost tearfully but still doggedly.*)

Why do you trouble me?

GHOST.

Man of the world, do you believe in me or not?

SCROOGE.

I do. I must.

(*He raises himself by the desk and sinks into his chair.*)

But why do you spirits walk the earth and *why* do you come to me?

GHOST.

(Sadly.)

It is required of every man that the spirit within him shall walk abroad among his fellow men. And if that Spirit goes not forth in life it is condemned to do so after death. Oh, woe is me—and to witness what it might have shared on earth and helped to happiness!

(*Again the Ghost cries and shakes its chain. Scrooge moves uneasily in his chair.*)

SCROOGE.

(*Suddenly noticing the make-up of the chain.*)

You are fettered. Tell me why? And why a chain of cash boxes, ledgers, keys and steel purses?

(*He seems to enumerate these things as he sees them.*)

GHOST.

(*Sternly.*)

I wear the chain I forged in life. I made this, link by link and yard by yard. Is its pattern strange to you? Or would you know the weight and length of the coil you bear yourself?

(*Scrooge looks about him on the floor as if expecting to see such a chain.*)

It was as heavy and as long as this full seven years ago this Christmas Eve. You have labored on it since.

(*Scrooge again moves uneasily.*)

It is a ponderous chain.

SCROOGE.

(*After a pause.*)

There is not much comfort, Jacob, in those words.

GHOST.

I have none to give. That comes from other regions, Ebenezer Scrooge—

(*Scrooge looks apprehensive.*)

and is conveyed by other messengers—to other kinds of men.

SCROOGE.

Yes. I see.

GHOST.

A very little more is permitted to me. My spirit never walked beyond this counting house —mark me—my spirit never roved beyond the narrow limits of this money changing hole, and weary journeys lie before me.

SCROOGE.

(*Feeling easier and putting his hands in his pockets.*)

You must have been very slow about it, Jacob; Seven years dead and travelling all the time—

GHOST.

(*Interrupting.*)

The whole time. No rest! No peace! Incessant torture of remorse!

(*He rises slowly, repeating.*)

Remorse! Remorse!

SCROOGE.

Why, you were always a good man of business, Jacob.

GHOST.

(*With withering scorn.*)

BUSINESS!

(*More softly.*)

Mankind was my business. The common wel-

fare was my business. Charity, mercy and benevolence were all my business.

SCROOGE.

But your dealings in trade—

GHOST.

The dealings of trade were but a drop in the comprehensive ocean of my business.

(*He sits and goes on.*)

And at this time of year I suffer most. Ah! Why did I walk through crowded ways with my eyes turned down and never raise them to that blessed Star which led the wise men to a poor abode? Were there no poor homes to which its light would have led *me?*

(*Scrooge winces and moves but the Ghost goes on sternly.*)

GHOST.

Hear me! My time is nearly gone.

SCROOGE.

I will. But don't be hard on me, Jacob. Don't be flowery, pray.

GHOST.

How it is that I appear to you in shape that you can see, I may not tell. I have sat, invisible, beside you many and many a day.

(*Scrooge looks up and shivers at this.*)

That is no light part of my penance. But I

am here tonight to warn you that you have still one chance, one hope of escaping my fate, a chance of my procuring, Ebenezer.

SCROOGE.

You were always a good friend to me. Thankee.

GHOST.

(*Rising, solemnly.*)

You will be haunted—

(*Scrooge looks up in alarm.*)

by three spirits.

SCROOGE.

(*Rubbing his chin thoughtfully.*)

Is—is that the chance and hope you mentioned, Jacob?

GHOST.

It is.

SCROOGE.

I—think I'd rather not.

GHOST.

Without their visits you cannot hope to shun the path I tread.

(*He begins to move backward.*)

Expect the first tonight, when the clock strikes twelve.

SCROOGE.

(*Rising and following.*)

Couldn't I take 'em all at once and have it over, Jacob?

GHOST.

(*Inexorably as it drifts through the door.*)

Expect the second on the next night at the same hour.

(*It is now in the outer office.*)

And the third upon the next night. Look to see me no more!

SCROOGE.

(*To himself.*)

That is *something.*

GHOST.

And look that for your own sake you remember what has passed between us, Ebenezer!

(*As he says these last words the Ghost still drifting backward passes out through the window, which has slowly raised itself, the bottom part swinging outward for its exit. When it is gone, Scrooge stands looking after it, motionless for a few seconds. Then he turns slowly down stage, passes his hand across his brow, clears his throat, rubs his chin and starts to say, "Humbug" but somehow finds that it won't go be-*

yond the first syllable. He tries again and finding the same result contents himself with "Hum." Just now another boy puts his face to the keyhole and softly starts the "God save you, Merry Gentlemen." Involuntarily Scrooge starts to raise his hand in anger, but he suddenly stops the gesture, brings his hand instead to his chin which he rubs slowly, lost in thought. The song dies away softly and the curtain falls slowly.)

CURTAIN

MR. SCROOGE

Act Two

ACT TWO

SCENE: *Mr. Scrooge's bed chamber, a great, bare room. The walls white, plain and bare of pictures. A great four poster is set at the right, its head against the wall R. The bed curtains are drawn back. There is a fireplace at the opposite side of the room, in the L. wings about L. 2. E., and the door to the street is just below it. At the C. of the back flat is a great window, covered by heavy curtains which fall from near the ceiling to the floor. L. of this window is a high, old-fashioned chest of drawers, which in one of the visions is transformed into a sideboard. The rest of this L. side of the stage is bare of furniture, except such as is set there in the different visions. There is an invisible panel just beside the head of the bed, through which the Ghosts of Christmas, Past and Future enter. A chair stands against this same side wall, just below.*

Throughout this act there is a music, which fills in all changes of scene and, like an intermezzo, leads from the disappearance of one Ghost to the arrival of the next.

AT RISE: *The only light in the room is from*

the narrow opening between the great curtains, as from a street lamp outside. This light is cold, green and the music seems to carry a song of wintry woe, with a suggestion of ghostly voices, cries and undertones. This lasts for some time, but at last footsteps are heard as if on the stairs and a key grates harshly in the door. When it at length opens Scrooge enters slowly, candle in hand, still wearing his hat and coat, having just come up from the street, and still muttering to himself "I won't believe it," and as he turns after closing the door, "It's hum-hum-well, I won't believe it," etc. He sets the candle down on the mantel shelf, glances around a little uneasily, shivers, mutters "Fool!" and starts to remove his coat. Suddenly he stops and listens intently, then with a "Bah!" takes off the great coat and hangs it up on the back flat. Coming down again he once more stops and listens, even turning round to look behind him. Then he starts to run his hand through his hair and finds his hat upon his head still. He goes up and hangs it with the coat. Next he goes to the fireplace and stirs up a faint glow from its coals and, after another sudden pause, another look over his shoulder and another muttered, "Fool!" he puts his gruel, which is on the hob, to warm. He then rises and says aloud, "I won't believe it,"

and proceeds to pull off his inside coat which he hangs on the chair by the bed. He is evidently thinking hard, for he pulls off his waistcoat and stands with it in his hands while he gazes sourly into vacancy. Noticing it at length, he lifts it to fold it but again becomes absorbed in thought and so mechanically tries to hang it on the empty air. When it promptly falls to the floor he picks it up savagely and puts it on the chair. Then he mutters scornfully, "Mankind is my business. Bah!" He now starts up stage for his dressing gown, but stops short again lost in thought. Goes ahead slowly, absently takes his hat instead of the gown and puts it on as he turns again to the fire. Discovering his mistake he angrily puts the hat back and throws himself into the dressing gown. Then he laughs shortly and says, "Christmas, Bah! Christmas Spirit! Bah!! I won't believe—" he breaks off to go up and open the great curtains, through which is seen the clock in a near church tower. He says, "Five minutes to the hour," shivers and, closing the curtains, goes and sits on the edge of the bed and after a pause pulls off one boot, with the aid of the bootjack which he takes from under the bed. He stops the operation to listen intently, pulls off the other boot, listens again, puts on one slipper but holds the foot

suspended in the air before dropping it to listen once more and even to look behind him. Then he resolutely puts on the other slipper and after another pause reaches for his watch but stops, as a great bell in the church tower begins to strike. He counts the strokes. "Ding, Dong. A quarter past. Ding, Dong. Half past. Ding, Dong. A quarter to it. Ding, Dong. The hour itself—and Nothing Else!" As he says the last two words the bell begins to strike the hour itself and instantly the candle goes out, there is a moment of pitchy darkness (during which the Spirit of Christmas Past enters through the panel by the bed and stands by the foot board). Then, as the hour ceases to strike, the lights, which illuminate the Spirit go up, showing it to be the figure of a youth, dressed as described by Dickens, his hair long and white. He wears a white tunic and a belt so arranged as to carry the electric lights which, while hidden, throw a light up and down on his figure and upon Scrooge. He carries the branch of Holly which also sheds light on Scrooge from its lamps. The tunic is flower trimmed. From its cap a stronger light is thrown, and it carries a sort of funnel-shaped extinguisher large enough to fit down over its head and shoulders.

There is a pause as this figure is seen by Scrooge

who draws back at first sight. Then he summons all his aggressiveness and asks, in a voice gruff at first but fading into milder tones in spite of him.

SCROOGE.

Are you the Spirit—sir—whose coming was —foretold—to—me?

SPIRIT.

(*In a soft, clear, far-away, bell-like voice.*) I am, Ebenezer.

SCROOGE.

(*To himself.*)

Ebenezer. Humph!

(*Aloud.*)

Who and what are you?

SPIRIT.

(*Softly.*)

I am the Spirit of Christmas Past.

SCROOGE.

(*Growing bolder.*)

Long past?

SPIRIT.

No . . . *Your* past.

SCROOGE.

(*Rubbing his chin thoughtfully, after a pause.*)

I don't know why, but I feel a special desire to see you put on the extinguish—the hat you carry.

SPIRIT.
(*Sadly.*)

Would you so soon put out the light I give?

SCROOGE.

Oh, it *is* an extinguisher.

SPIRIT.

It is called "Selfishness." Ah! Is it not enough that you are one of those whose passions made this cap, which shuts the light of Christmas from men's hearts?

SCROOGE.

I had no intention of offending you, Spirit.

(*There is a pause and Scrooge rubs his chin in thought.*)

SPIRIT.
(*As if in answer to his thought.*)

Your welfare.

SCROOGE.

Eh? My welfare is the reason of your coming.

(*Suddenly.*)

Do you read all my thoughts?

(*To himself.*)

Humph! A night of unbroken rest would have been more conducive to my welfare, I think.

SPIRIT.

(*Commandingly.*)

Your reclamation then! Take heed!

(*He reaches out and lays a hand on Scrooge's arm.*)

Rise and come with me!

(*The lights upon the stage grow dim as Scrooge slowly rises against his will.*)

SCROOGE.

But, Spirit—if you are one—the weather outside and the hour are not adapted to pedestrian—

SPIRIT.

It is but a step to take. Let yourself go.

SCROOGE.

I am lightly clad and with a cold upon me now—

(*A motion of the spirit seems like a hypnotic spell forcing him to move.*)

I am a mortal and liable to fall.

SPIRIT.

(*Gently.*)

Bear but a touch of my hand there—

(*He lays his hand on Scrooge's heart.*)
and you shall be upheld in more than this.

(*The lights go out and the music swells upward, as the Spirit continues.*)

The Spirit of Christmas in the heart of man works wonders!

(*The lights go up slowly after this and show the L. hand side of the stage with old school forms, desks and a boy (Scrooge's former self) seated alone. The light is concentrated on this portion of the stage leaving Scrooge and the spirit only lighted by the spirits own light.*)

Look!

SCROOGE.

(*Standing R. C. with Spirit, passes his hand across his brow.*)

I—I was bred in that place. I—I *am* that boy,—how can that be?

(*The music swells out, a pause, then Scrooge says as if in a dream.*)

It is the lonely Christmas time, in the old school room—I am—reading—Ali Baba and the Sultan's groom turned upside down—by the Genii—

(*The words seem to come from him mechanically.*)

I feel a thousand hopes and cares, long, long, forgotten. I *am* that lonely boy—poor boy—poor boy—

(*Suddenly.*)

I wish—

(*He stops*)

SPIRIT.

(*Gently.*)

You wish?

SCROOGE.

(*Gruffly.*)

Nothing. It's too late now.

SPIRIT.

What is it?

SCROOGE.

(*Reluctantly.*)

There—there was a boy—singing a Christmas carol at my office door last night. I—I might have given him something.

(Voices of children are heard outside the school room calling good-byes and Christmas greetings. Scrooge listens.)

They are all going home—all but me.

SPIRIT.

The scene touches you.

SCROOGE.

(Recovering his gruff voice and drawing up stiffly.)

I am gratified that I am no longer alone—ahem! *Lonely!*

(*The door opens softly and a Little Girl comes in and stealing up behind the boy throws her arms about his neck. The boy looks up. Scrooge exclaims.*)

My little sister, Fan!

(*He checks himself as if afraid of her hearing and vanishing.*)

SPIRIT.
(*Gently.*)

These are but the shadows of the things that have been. They have no consciousness of us.

(*The Boy has risen at the girl's touch and stands holding her hands.*)

FAN.
(*In a soft, distant, child's voice.*)

Dear, dear brother.

(*The boy dashes his sleeve across his eyes.*)

I have come to bring you home. Home! Home! Home, for good and all. Father is so much kinder and he has sent me in a coach to bring you.

(*She begins to draw him toward the door as she talks.*)

And you're to be a man and we'll be together and have the merriest Christmas in all the world.

(*The Boy silently kisses her and she draws him outside the door which closes. A dreadful voice outside is heard saying, "Bring down Mast Scrooge's box!"*)

SPIRIT.

You recollect the way they go?

SCROOGE.

Remember it? Why, I could walk it blindfold.

SPIRIT.

(*As to himself.*)

Strange to have forgotten it for so many years.

SCROOGE.

(*As if seeing this which follows.*)

The schoolmaster himself takes us into that veriest old well of a shivering best parlor. And I am thrown into a dreadful state of mind by his shaking hands with me. And now we are off, the trunk tied up behind the coach, the quick wheels dashing the hoar frost and snow from off the leaves of the evergreens like a spray—

(*He stops suddenly.*)

SPIRIT.

(*As the lights on the scene go down, turning his own light on Scrooge.*)

Your lip is trembling. And what is that upon your cheek?

SCROOGE.
(*Recovering.*)

A pimple, I tell you.

(*His voice chokes up.*)

Little Fan!

SPIRIT.

Always a delicate creature whom a breath might have withered, but she had a large heart.

SCROOGE.

She had. I'll not gainsay that, Spirit, God forbid!

SPIRIT.

She died a woman—and had, I think,—children.

SCROOGE.
(*A little choked in voice.*)

One child.

SPIRIT.
(*Quietly.*)

True. Your nephew.

(*Scrooge looks away ashamed, the music again swells out.*)

SPIRIT.

Let us see another Christmas.

(*He waves the Holly wand and the lights go up revealing a corner in old Fezziwig's warehouse. Fezziwig, a splendid old fellow, is at a high desk about C.*)

Do you know this place, this warehouse?

SCROOGE.
(*Eagerly.*)

Know it? I was apprenticed here and— Why, it's old Fezziwig himself. Bless his heart! It's Fezziwig alive again!

(*Fezziwig glances up at the clock, slaps his hands genially and calls in a rich, soft, fat, jovial voice, that like all the vision voices suggests distance.*)

FEZZIWIG.

Yo ho, there! Ebenezer! Dick!

(*Scrooge's youthful self, followed by his fellow apprentice, appears at the door L.*)

SCROOGE.
(*To himself.*)

Myself again. And Dick Wilkins, my fellow prentice, to be sure, bless me, yes.

FEZZIWIG.

Yo ho, my boys! No more work tonight! Christmas Eve, Dick! Christmas Eve, Ebenezer! Let's have the shutters up before a man can say Jack Robinson.

(*The Boys seize the shutters and are out the door with them in an instant. Fezziwig sings a snatch of song as they run and puts away his own papers. Then he gets down from his stool.*)

Hillo ho! Clear away, my lads!—

(*As they re-enter.*)

and let's have lots of room here. Hillo, Dick! Chirrup, Ebenezer!

(*The desk and tables are pushed back against the walls, the music accompanying the hurry. When this is done, Fezziwig goes on.*)

Ah! The old warehouse makes as snug and dry and bright a ball room as you'd desire to see upon a Christmas Eve!

(*A fiddler enters L., and is shown to the high desk as a stand. The music softens as he tunes his fiddle.*)

Merry Christmas, Fiddler!

(*To the youths.*)

He tunes like fifty stomach-aches.

(*All shout with good honest laughter; the door opens to let in Mrs. Fezziwig, one vast expansive smile.*)

Hillo, my dear!

(*As he leads her across, the other guests begin to enter in twos and threes. At once the Fiddler starts "Sir Roger de Coverly" and instantly they are all off in the dance, Mr. and*

Mrs. Fezziwig taking the top. As the dance is formed, he looks down the lines and laughs as he says.)

A good stiff piece of work cut out for us! So many couples and all people who will dance and who are not to be trifled with, who have no notion of walking. Well, come on!

(*They dance, finishing with a flourish and a burst of enthusiasm, then Fezziwig and Mrs. Fezziwig go to the door and he calls out.*)

And now the cold roast and the cold-boiled! I bid ye all to supper!

(*The guests pass them, out through the door with laughter and Merry Christmas salutations as they disappear, the Fezziwigs going last. The lights go down as they exit.*)

SPIRIT.

A simple scene.

(*Scrooge is silent.*)

A small matter to make these simple folk so full of gratitude.

SCROOGE.

Small? Ah, you do not know.

SPIRIT.

Why, is it not? He has spent but a few pounds of your mortal money—money you helped him to make—is that so much that he deserves praise?

SCROOGE.

But—

(*He stops, a pause.*)

but—it isn't that. It isn't that, Spirit. He has the power to make our service light or heavy, say that his power lies in words and looks and things so small and slight that it is impossible to count them up. The happiness he gives is quite as great as if it cost a fortune. An employer can—

SCROOGE.

(*He stops and steals a guilty look at the Spirit as he remembers Bob Cratchit.*)

SPIRIT.

(*Softly.*)

What is it?

SCROOGE.

(*Gruffly, after a pause.*)

Nothing. Nothing in particular.

SPIRIT.

Something, I think.

SCROOGE.

(*Stubborn.*)

No.

(*As if compelled to answer by the Spirit's look.*)

Well—I—I should like to be able to speak

—to say a word or two to my clerk, just now, that's all.

SPIRIT.

(*Suddenly, as if giving an order to the air.*)
My time grows short. Quick!
(*The light on the next vision flashes up and shows Scrooge's former fiancée seated as if in an arbor of green vines.*)

SCROOGE.

(*After gazing silently a moment.*)
I—I am affianced to her—that is I *was*.

THE GIRL.

(*As if continuing a conversation.*)

It matters little, to you, very little. Another idol has displaced me. But if it can cheer and comfort you in time to come, as I would have tried to do, I have no just cause to complain or grieve.

(*She dries her eyes, Scrooge seems impelled to go to, and answer her. He speaks as if in a trance.*)

SCROOGE.

(*As if repeating lesson.*)

The old words force themselves forth.
(*To her.*)
What—idol—has—displaced—you?

THE GIRL.

A golden one.

SCROOGE.
(*Still mechanically.*)

This is the even handed dealing of the world. There is nothing it is so hard on as poverty, nothing it condemns with such severity as the pursuit of wealth.

THE GIRL.
(*Sadly.*)

All your other hopes have merged into the hope of being beyond reason rich. I have seen your nobler aspirations fall off one by one, until the master-passion—Gain—engrosses you altogether.

SCROOGE.
(*In the same dead tone.*)

I am not changed toward you. Am I?

THE GIRL.
(*With feeling.*)

Our contract is an old one. It was made when we were both poor and content, until we could improve our worldly fortune. You *are* changed. For when it was made you were another man.

SCROOGE.
(*Coldly.*)

Have I ever sought release?

THE GIRL.

In words, no, never. In a changed nature, in an altered spirit, in everything that made our love of any value in your sight—yes, yes, yes, a thousand times, yes! Oh, I would so gladly think otherwise. But heaven knows when *I* have learned a truth like this how strong, how irresistible it must be.

(*There is a pause, Scrooge stands with bent head, the music, minor in tone, steals over them softly. At last the Girl goes on.*)

And so I release you. . . .

(*She rises.*)

with a full heart, for the love of the man you once were.

(*She turns and the lights grow dim as she leaves the stage. Scrooge staggers back a little.*)

SCROOGE.
(*Hoarsely.*)

No! No!

(*He passes his hand across his brow then straightens up, turns and sees the Spirit. Suddenly springing toward it.*)

I'll bear no more! You have awakened these sleeping shadows!

(*His face is distorted with pain.*)

You, Spirit of Christmas Past, you—I'll bear no more.

(*He seizes the extinguisher cap and puts it over the Spirit's head quickly. The lights instantly go down and as the Spirit seems to sink to the floor they go out. The Spirit disappears in the darkness, which continues while the intermezzo music swells out for a few seconds. There is an instant's silence, then the church bell is heard again ringing the hour. On the final stroke a red glow flows over the stage, coming through the space below the great curtains at the back. Scrooge is dimly seen, standing by his bed, his back to it, holding to its curtains as if afraid to look toward the source of the light. The music softens enough so that a deep voice is heard calling—almost singingly—Scrooge's name. Three times it comes slowly, each time stronger in tone, the music rising in obligato. As the call sounds for the last time the music suddenly changes into a softer, joyous melody of Christmas, all light and warmth, and at the instant the great curtains part wide, showing* (*where the window was*) *a great throne built up of fruits, Christmas greens and flowers. On the throne is seated high the jovial*

Spirit of Christmas Present. He wears, instead of the tunic of white, a great green robe or mantle bordered with fur. The throat and breast are bare. A Holly wreath for a crown and the white hair of Christmas Past now turned to brown curls, long and free. From his belt hangs the antique scabbard, but no sword.)

SPIRIT.

(*In a full, free voice, the voice that called Scrooge's name.*)

Come hither, man! Come and know me better!

(*Scrooge comes a little forward as if unwillingly though. The Spirit goes on genially.*)

I am the Spirit of Christmas Present. Look upon me!

(*Scrooge raises his head but at once drops his eyes, refusing to meet those of the Spirit.*)

You have never seen the like of me, have never walked forth with the younger brothers of my family, though more than fifty of them—

SCROOGE.

Fifty? How many brothers have, you, Spirit?

SPIRIT.

More than eighteen hundred.

SCROOGE.
(*Half to himself.*)
A tremendous family to provide for.

SPIRIT.
(*Rising.*)
Touch my robe!

SCROOGE.
(*Holding back.*)
No!

SPIRIT.
(*Kindly.*)
Come, man, come!

SCROOGE.
No. I was forced to pass some time under the spell of Christmas Past—

SPIRIT.
(*Smilingly.*)
And the Spirit of Christmas Present now holds you in his own loving spell!

(*He waves his torch aloft above Scrooge's head. Scrooge puts out a hand as if to stay him. The Spirit takes the hand in his and makes a gesture of command as to the air. Instantly the lights go out, the music rises, this is followed by the sound of sleigh bells outside, of voices calling greetings, of a Christmas song of cheer and as the latter dies away the lights be-*

THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT

gin to go up. The scene disclosed is the Cratchit home, the family at dinner.) (Scrooge and the Spirit stand at the R. watching the scene which is of course set in the L. hand half of the stage as are all these visions. The Christmas dinner party consists of Mrs. Cratchit, Martha, Peter and two small Cratchits, all laughing and talking at once.)

SCROOGE.

Bob Cratchit's family, all but Bob!

SPIRIT.

And Tiny Tim!

(*He sprinkles incense apparently from his torch and the laughter increases.*)

SCROOGE.

Is there a peculiar flavor in what you sprinkle from your torch?

SPIRIT.

There is.

(*Joyously.*)

My own!

SCROOGE.

Would it apply to any dinner?

SPIRIT.

To any kindly given, especially upon this day, and to a poor one most.

SCROOGE.

Why to—

SPIRIT.

(*Answering before he finishes.*)

Because it most needs the cheer of the Christmas Spirit!

(*The door at L. opens and Bob Cratchit enters with Tiny Tim upon his shoulder. There is a shout of welcome and all the rest rush to set the chairs aright for these two, putting Tim next his father at the table. He is evidently dear to them all.*)

SPIRIT.

They love the crippled child.

(*Amid the chatter, subdued enough to seem dream-like, and for Scrooge and the Spirit to be heard easily, Bob begins to serve. The first plate is sent to Tiny Tim and Martha gives it with a loving pat of his hand.*)

See, he is first in all their thoughts.

SCROOGE.

(*At a loss for an answer.*)

It—it is a large family, to—

SPIRIT.

To support on what you pay the father? Yes.

(*Scrooge coughs.*)

BOB.

(*Lifting a glass.*)

A merry Christmas to us all, my dears, may God bless us! And now, a toast! Er—Mr. Scrooge! I give you Mr. Scrooge, the founder of the feast!

(*Scrooge turns away from the touch which the Spirit lays lightly on his arm at this.*)

MRS. CRATCHIT.

The—the founder of the feast? I wish I had him here, I'd give him a piece of my mind to feast upon and—

BOB.

My dear. The children, Christmas day!

MRS. CRATCHIT.

It should be Christmas day, I'm sure, on which one drinks the health of such an odious —you know he is, Bob.

BOB.

My dear. Christmas day.

(*He steadily holds up his glass for the toast.*)

MRS. CRATCHIT.

(*After a pause.*)

Well, I'll drink his health for your sake and the day's.

(*A pause.*)

Long life to him and a Merry Christmas.

(*All drink in silence, a pause.*)

TINY TIM.

(*Softly.*)

And a merry Christmas to him. God bless us every one!

(*The lights gradually go down during the rest of this scene.*)

BOB.

I don't believe there ever was such a Christmas goose as this, my dear.

(*All applaud the sentiment as if any change of topic were well.*)

SPIRIT.

And no one of them says, or thinks, it at all, a small goose for so large a family. It would be flat heresy to do so—God bless them—no Cratchit would be guilty of it.

SCROOGE.

It is meagre, though.

(*To himself.*)

Yes, it is. I admit it, Spirit.

(*The lights go out, resting at the last only on Bob and Tiny Tim.*)

SPIRIT.

Aye, meagre indeed for so many—but then

"most poor men have larger families than they should.

SCROOGE.

(*Not recognizing his own words at first.*)
Yes.

(*Then quickly as he sees the point.*)
Yes, I see. Perhaps I was—

(*He stops unable to quite admit himself in the wrong yet.*)

SPIRIT.

Yes?

SCROOGE.
(*Unheeding.*)

But the crippled boy—he looks feeble—he—Tiny Tim will live, I suppose?

SPIRIT.
(*Slowly.*)

I see a vacant seat in the poor chimney corner, and a crutch without an owner.

SCROOGE.
(*Quite involuntarily.*)

Ah, no—I—

SPIRIT.

If these shadows remain unaltered by the future, the child will die.

SCROOGE.
(*In a low voice.*)

I don't know why I feel your words so—but, Spirit, say he will be spared, he will be—

SPIRIT.
(*Quietly.*)

If these shadows remain unaltered by the future, no other of my race will find him here.

(*He turns to Scrooge.*)

What, then, if he be like to die he had better do it and decrease the surplus population.

(*Scrooge shrinks away.*)

Man! Man! If man you be in heart not adamant, forbear that wicked cant! It may be that in the sight of Heaven you are more worthless and less fit to live than millions like this poor man's child. Oh, God! To hear the insect on the leaf pronouncing on the too much life among his hungry brothers in the dust!

(*The soft music which has accompanied this speech now changes to a merry air and the lights flash up on a game of blind-man's-buff which is being played by Scrooge's nephew, Fred, the latter's fiancée, Nell, Topper, Dolly and several other guests. The game finishes, as soon as the lights are well up and all run off laughing and talking except Fred and Nell, who linger behind. As soon as the door is*

closed on the rest, Fred tries to steal a kiss from Nell, but she runs away, laughing.)

FRED.

Why not? It's Christmas day. You should give me the gift I want.

NELL.

(*Laughing.*)

Someone might see.

FRED.

There's no one here to see.

NELL.

(*In mock seriousness.*)

Yes there is, Fred.

FRED.

(*Looking round.*)

Who?

NELL.

(*Mysteriously.*)

The Spirit of Christmas.

(*They both laugh.*)

SCROOGE.

Can they see us?

SPIRIT.

(*Softly.*)

No. 'Tis but a true word spoken in jest.

FRED.

God bless the Spirit of Christmas!

(*The spirit bows his head as if receiving a benediction.*)

I'm not afraid of him. Are you?

(*He tries for the kiss again.*)

NELL.

No, but—how I wish—

FRED.

What?

NELL.

(*Smiling at her thought.*)

I wish the Spirit of Christmas were here—oh, of course, I know he is—but I mean, I wish he could see you and could know how we love each other—

SCROOGE.

(*Aside to Spirit.*)

Hadn't we better withdraw?

NELL.

And that he would, seeing that, get into your Uncle Scrooge's heart and make him want to give you a chance.

FRED.

Why not wish a possible thing? But truly I don't want Uncle Scrooge to *give* me anything.

I don't think that even my longing for you, even my rebellion against having to wait for slow advancement, could make me want what I didn't earn. And yet it *is* hard to be patient sometimes, when there is so much, and when my hard work brings so little.

NELL.
(*Thoughtfully.*)

I sometimes wonder, Fred, why everyone in this little world must be forced to the business of making money. Some people would be better fitted for other work.

FRED.
(*Thoughtfully.*)

I had never thought of that. But as it *is* the rule. I must—

NELL.
(*Interruptingly.*)

But just the same, I wish that Uncle Scrooge *would* smooth the way a little. There!

(*She brushes the thoughts away and goes on.*)

But this is Christmas eve and we are here—

FRED.

Together!

(*He takes her hands and they look long into each other's eyes.*)

SPIRIT.
(*As if to himself.*)
He could smooth the way so easily.

SCROOGE.
If you are speaking to me, Spirit—I had to make my own way; and I believe it develops character—

SPIRIT.
The old cant phrases again. Yet you are self-sacrificing, for, while closing your heart to others may develop character in them, it steadily and surely dwarfs your own soul.

FRED.
Together! Ah! How I wait for the time when we may be together *all* the time—

NELL.
It is coming. Our wants are few, you'll be advanced, and another year—or two—
(*Quickly.*)
and meantime we have our love at any rate.

FRED.
I know. And being loved by you should be enough happiness to last a man a thousand lifetimes—and yet, it is—

NELL.
It is—Christmas time—and—hark, here

come the others back again. Go over there! (*Pointing to the opposite side of the room.*) Quick!

(*He sits at the R. and she drops into a chair at the extreme L. just as the rest of the party come back. Topper stops at the door, looks at them, walks down to the centre and very pointedly looks from one to the other. As the rest see the very palpable distance between the lovers there is a shout. Nell runs to hide her face on Dolly's shoulder and Topper gravely shakes hands with Fred in mock sympathy.*)

FRED.

(*Embarrassed in spite of himself, to change the subject.*)

Well—er—Oh, come!

(*He goes centre.*)

Come, let's have the guessing game.

TOPPER.

(*Gravely.*)

Yes. Let us guess why you and Nell—

FRED.

(*Laughing.*)

Come. All sit down and find what I am thinking of.

DOLLY.
(*Leading Nell down centre.*)

I have guessed it already. Here it is!
(*Indicating Nell. All laugh. They sit down during the following.*)

SPIRIT.

Small wonder that he loves her. She is very pretty.

SCROOGE.
(*Crustily.*)

Humph!

SPIRIT.
(*As if to himself.*)

Exceeding pretty. A dimpled, surprised-looking capital face. A ripe little mouth that seems made to be kissed—

SCROOGE.
(*Still gruff.*)

Humph! As undoubtedly it is.

SPIRIT.

And the sunniest pair of eyes you ever saw in any little creature's head.

SCROOGE.

(*Half interested in spite of himself.*)
Fairly so.

SPIRIT.

Although she is what you might call provoking, you know. But satisfactory too. Oh, perfectly satisfactory.

FRED.

(*Looking round the circle of guests.*)

Now for it. But you must only ask questions about this thing I'm thinking of, which can be answered by "yes" or "no."

DOLLY.

Well, is it animal, vegetable or mineral?

(*All laugh.*)

What's the matter?

TOPPER.

How can he answer that with "Yes" or "no?" Is it vegetable?

FRED.

No.

NELL.

Animal?

FRED.

Yes.

DOLLY.

Is it a deer?

FRED.

A dear? Ask Topper.

(*All laugh.*)

No.

TOPPER.

A whale?

DOLLY.

A whale isn't an animal.

NELL.

Does it growl?

FRED.

(*Smiling.*)

Yes.

TOPPER.

Is it savage?

FRED.

(*Smiling more broadly.*)

Yes.

DOLLY.

Live in London?

FRED.

Yes.

TOPPER.

Walk about the streets?

FRED.

Yes.

NELL.

Is it ever killed in the markets?

FRED.

(*Smiling.*)

No.

NELL.

Does it live in a menagerie?

FRED.

(*Laughing.*)

No.

DOLLY.

Is it a bear?

FRED.

No.

NELL.

Will it bite?

FRED.

(*Laughing delightedly.*)

No.

TOPPER.

Is it made a show of?

FRED.

(*Jumping up to shout with laughter.*)

No!

SCROOGE

What can it be, Spirit?

NELL.

(*Bursting into laughter too.*)

I've found—it—out—I know—what—it is!

(*All crowd around her asking what it is.*)

FRED.

(*When he sees that she can stop laughing enough to answer.*)

What is it?

NELL.

It's—it's your *Uncle Scrooge!*

(*All shout.*)

TOPPER.

(*When the laugh is over.*)

You should have answered "yes" when Dolly guessed a "Bear."

OMNES.

That's so. That's so!

SCROOGE.

You are laughing, Spirit. Would you *now* expect me to smooth the way for that young scapegrace?

SPIRIT.

Not if he was unjust to you. But was he? Listen!

FRED.

Well, he has given us plenty of merriment, I'm sure, so it would be ungrateful not to drink his health.

(*A servant enters with glasses, filled, on a tray.*)

And here's a glass of mulled wine ready to our hands. I say "Uncle Scrooge."

(*He lifts his glass, all come to him, getting glasses and with hearty good will shout.*)

OMNES.

Well, UNCLE SCROOGE!

FRED.

A Merry Christmas to him, whatever he is! He wouldn't take it from me last night, but may he have it nevertheless! Uncle Scrooge!!

(*All drink. The lights fade out on the drinking and laughter.*)

SCROOGE.

Did you put him up to that, to disarm me?

SPIRIT.

It was my influence within his heart, but only such a heart can feel such influence.

(*Suddenly.*)

But, my time is short, my life upon this globe is very brief, it ends tonight. Today you turned away one who, in the goodness of his

heart, asked you to help the downcast ones of this great town. You had no place for Christmas or its spirit in your heart! Without that spirit—

(*Warningly.*)

I say, without that spirit *these* would throng your streets!

(*Suddenly spreads out his arms and instantly two children, ragged, wild, fearful to see, come from behind his robe and throw themselves abjectly before him, clinging to his garments.*)

SCROOGE.

(*Drawing back in horror.*)

What—what are these?

SPIRIT.

Man, look! Look well on these!

SCROOGE.

(*Faintly.*)

Are—they—are they—yours—

SPIRIT.

They are Man's! And they cling to the Spirit of Christmas appealing from such as you and your humanity-repelling creed of Gain. The boy is Ignorance! The girl is Want! Twin children of your Godless creed. Beware them both! And all in their degree! Man's brotherhood

with man alone can save mankind from them. Most, *most of all* beware this boy, upon his brow I see that written which is doom, unless man *be* his brother's keeper! Deny it! Slander those who tell it ye! And then abide the end!!

SCROOGE.

Have they no refuge? Can naught be done—

SPIRIT.

(*Turning full upon him, steadily.*)

Are there no prisons? Are there *no workhouses?*

(*Scrooge stretches out his hands beseechingly to hear no more and the lights go down quickly. In the dark the Spirit disappears and the intermezzo swells out for a few seconds. Then the light returns gradually, a green, cold light, showing Scrooge standing lost in thought, a troubled but less hardened look upon his face. The music changes to a weird sort of strain and Scrooge turns as if expecting someone, for once more the bell of the church is heard slowly striking the hour. As it finishes there comes slowly in the dim light, from the shadows at the back of the stage, the gray, quiet figure of the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come. The Spirit stops when some distance from Scrooge.*)

SCROOGE.

(*In a different voice but trying to be stern.*)

I am in the presence of the Spirit of Christmas Yet to Come?

(*He stops and there is no answer save that the Ghost turns as if to lead him elsewhere. He goes on.*)

You are about to show me the shadows of things that will happen in the time before us?

(*A pause.*)

Is that so, Spirit?

(*His only answer is the music like the sound of wind about the house. At last he continues in a low voice.*)

Spirit of the Future, I fear you—that is—I fear you more than—than any spectre I have seen. But I am not as I was—not that I'm wholly changed—but—as I know your mission is to do what you think is good to me I—I, well—

(*Bravely.*)

(*Forcing himself to say it.*)

I yield me to your spell.

(*As he says this a light, soft, not brilliant, seems to shine over him as if it came from the spirit and thus the spirit seems more in the shadow than ever, by contrast. It now points slowly to Scrooge's own bed. Scrooge turns wonderingly, and starts back at sight of what seems to be the figure of a dead man, covered by a sheet, lying there.*)

THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS YET TO COME

Who—who is that—who is it—there?

(*As if in answer there are heard as if voices of the air chanting sadly and very softly, "In all his life he kept his heart from men and none dared enter. And in his death hour he shall lie—alone." As this dies away on the air Scrooge is startled by the sound of a key in the lock of the door L. It opens stealthily and the figure of the char-woman enters cautiously. After a look around the room, she steals across to the bed, stops, looks behind her, moves forward again and then suddenly retreats as if afraid. Then she stops, snaps her fingers in bravado and, going to the bed, pulls down the heavy curtains about it and rolls them up to carry away, occasionally pausing in the work to glance at the door or at the motionless figure on the bed.*)

CHAR-WOMAN.

(*Muttering as she feels the texture of the curtains.*)

Good, good enough!

(*She rises and starts to go taking the bundle with her. The door latch clicks again. She instantly goes up as if to hide herself and a man glides in, goes to the bed and takes a small package from beneath a corner of the mattress, after a glance at the bed and the door, in caution. As he turns to go he sees the woman. She*

comes slowly and shamefacedly down. Both pause guiltily. At last she speaks. Both unconsciously lower their voices.)

Well, what's the odds then? Every person has a right to take care of themselves. *He* always did.

THE MAN.

That's true.

CHAR-WOMAN.

(*After a look at the man, argumentatively.*)

He frightened everyone away from him when he was alive—to—to profit us when he was dead.

(*She laughs a little nervously.*)

SCROOGE.

(*In horror.*)

Why must *I* look on this?

CHAR-WOMAN.

Why, then, don't stand there staring as if you was afraid. Who's the wiser? We're not going to pick holes on each other's coats—I suppose.

THE MAN.

No. No, indeed. I should hope not.

THE WOMAN.

(*Pointing to his bundle.*)

Let the undertaker's man alone to be the first. Eh?

(*Grinning.*)

THE MAN.

(*Also grinning faintly.*)

And let the char-woman alone to be the second.

(*They both laugh uncomfortably.*)

CHAR-WOMAN.

Very well then. Why wasn't he natural in his lifetime? If he'd a-been, he'd a-had somebody to look after him when he was struck with death.

THE MAN.

It's the truest word ever was spoke. It's a judgment on him.

CHAR-WOMAN.

I wish it was a little heavier judgment. And it would a-been if I could 'ave laid hands on anything else. There *was* some gold cuff buttons.

THE MAN.

(*Grinning again.*)

Yes.

CHAR-WOMAN.

Oh, you got 'em, eh? Well, Old Joe ought

to give me ten shillings for these bed curtains. Come along.

THE MAN.

You don't mean to say you took 'em down, rings and all, and him lying there?

THE WOMAN.

(*Stopping on her way to the door.*)

Yes, I do.

(*She laughs again.*)

THE MAN.

You were born to make your fortune,

(*He opens door for her.*)

and you'll certainly do it.

(*They exit laughing. Lights down.*)

SCROOGE.

Spirit, I see. The case of this man lying here might be my own. My life tends in that direction now. It is enough. No more! No more!

(*He gropes his way down the stage towards the R., the Spirit just above him. The music sounds again, a sad little refrain, and the lights grow brighter, showing at the L., the Cratchit family again, except Bob and Tiny Tim. Martha gets up and puts her hands on her mother's shoulders; the mother breaks into tears as she does so.*)

MRS. CRATCHIT.

(*Trying to dry her eyes.*)

There! I must not do so. Poor little—

(*She forces herself to speak the name.*)

Tiny Tim—would not desire us to be crying—and hark. Here comes your father, children, we must be brave for his sake. He will be thinking how he used to come in to us carrying—Tiny Tim—on his shoulder.

(*The door opens and Bob enters. He tries to greet them all brightly, but his voice is low and unsteady. The children come to him in silence and as he kisses his wife they all cling together for an instant.*)

BOB.

(*As he goes to a chair.*)

I—I met Mr. Scrooge's nephew on my way home, dears. He thought I looked—just a little—just a little, down, you know.

(*Trying to smile.*)

On which I told him—for he is the pleasantest spoken gentleman you ever heard. "I'm heartily sorry for it, Mr. Cratchit," he said, "and heartily sorry for your good wife."

(*Mrs. Cratchit takes Bob's hand in hers.*)

"If I can be of service to you in any way pray command me, pray come to me." Now it wasn't for anything he could do for us, so much as his

kind way. It really seemed as if he had known our Tiny Tim and felt with us.

MRS. CRATCHIT.

Yes, yes, dear.

(*She lays her hand on his head and the children group themselves about him. The lights fade out as Bob speaks.*)

BOB.

Spirit of Tiny Tim, thy essence was from God!

SCROOGE.

Take me from here, Spirit. I should not look on such a scene. I understand. I do understand.

(*A pause.*)

Spectre, something informs me that our parting moment is at hand. I know it, but I know not how, but, ere you go, tell me, what man that was whom we saw lying there, friendless and forsaken.

(*No answer comes.*)

Then—show me myself. Let me behold what I shall be in days to come.

(*The Spirit points to the window, and of themselves the curtains part, showing the churchyard opposite, its graves lighted by the moon's cold rays. Scrooge refuses to understand and says.*)

I see familiar scenes, but not myself. Show me what I shall become. Again I ask it, Spirit. I beseech it!

(*Slowly the Spirit points again to the bed and the light flows over it showing the figure there again. Scrooge looks from it to the Spirit and a trembling seems to shake him. He goes forward toward the bed as if to learn the answer for himself, but stops and turns back whispering.*)

Yes—yes—but ere I lift that covering and see, perhaps—my—own—face—there, answer me one question. Are—are they the shadows of—of things that *will* be. Or are they the shadows of the things that *may* be, only?

(*The Spirit simply points steadily and Scrooge's agony grows more and more with each instant. He begins slowly and in a low tone to plead.*)

Men's courses will foreshadow certain things to which, if persevered in, they will lead; but —but if the courses be departed from?

(*No answer.*)

The ends will change?

(*No answer.*)

Say it is so with what you show me. Say that I am not the man who lay upon that bed! No! Spirit! No! No!

(*The Spirit still steadily pointing to the bed begins to move backward as if going. Scrooge falls upon his knees.*)

Spirit, hear me! I am not the man I was! I will not be the man I must have been but for this intercourse!

(*He becomes desperate for the Spirit moves away in unresponding silence.*)

Why show me this if I am past all hope?

(*The Spirit seems almost to pause. Scrooge takes it as a sign.*)

Good Spirit, your own nature intercedes for me and pities me! Ah! Tell me! Tell me that I yet may change these shadows you have shown me!

(*The Spirit nears the wall and Scrooge entreatingly follows on his knees.*)

I—I will live an altered life! I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep its spirit there in all the year!

(*He becomes desperate and goes on almost hysterically.*)

I will live in the past, the present, the future! The spirits of all three shall strive within me! I will not shut out the lessons they teach! Tell me, Spirit! Tell me it is not yet too late! Tell me! Tell me!

(*Suddenly at the edge of the fireplace the Spirit disappears. Scrooge gazes at the spot a*

moment, then staggers to his feet, haggard and white. He gets to the support of the bedpost and steadies himself by it whispering.)

I have seen—the—shadows—of the things —that—*will*—be!

(*With a cry of anguish, he falls to the floor.*)

CURTAIN

MR. SCROOGE

Act Three

ACT THREE

SCENE: *Same as Act Two. The bed curtains are in place and closed.*

AT RISE: *There are heard outside in the street shouts, laughter and Christmas greetings. Suddenly the bed curtains are pushed open and the anxious face of Scrooge is thrust out. He looks around the room carefully, slowly, and the expression of his face as slowly changes to wonder and then, as he passes his hand across his face and knows that he is awake, to relief. He next sits up on the edge of the bed, clad as in Act Two in his dressing gown, and after a thoughtful moment a slow smile begins to steal over his face. It grows and spreads and is followed by a soft chuckle. Another smiling thoughtful moment and the chuckle is replaced by a soft laugh of pleasure. He murmurs, "Yes, it is true. It happened. It all happened." He next scrambles out of bed and looks around again. Suddenly he sees the bed curtains and seizing them wraps them about him and folds them in his arms exclaiming.*)

SCROOGE.

They're not torn down! They're *not* torn

down, rings and all! They're here! I am here! The shadows of the things that would have been may be dispelled! They will be! I know they will!

(*He hides his face in the curtains in joy and when he lifts his head again he dashes away some tears from his eyes. Then he comes down, stretching his arms wide in very happiness.*)

I will live in the past, the present and the future. The spirit of Christmas shall *live* in my heart all my days. Oh, Jacob Marley, Heaven and Christmas be praised that this is true!

(*He looks to the R.*)

Yes, there is where the Ghost of Christmas Past appeared to me. It's true!

(*Rubbing his hands happily.*)

It all happened!

(*He looks to the L.*)

And there's the saucepan the gruel was in! It's true. It all happened!

(*He goes to the fireplace, almost skipping, his walk is so light.*)

I don't know what day of the month it is. I don't know how long I've been among the spirits. I don't know anything, I think. I'm quite a baby. Never mind. I don't care! I'd rather be a baby. Who-o-p! Ha-l-l-ooo-o!

(*He sees the window.*)

That's where the Ghost of Christmas Present had his throne. It's true. It all happened!

(*He begins to pull off his dressing gown but pauses to shake his head knowingly and to laugh softly. Then he pulls off his cravat and the chuckle grows into a laugh that begins to rise and rise in volume and goodness every instant. It is a really splendid laugh for one so unused to the exercise; but right in the middle of it, he stops, and listens intently almost rapturously to the burst of Christmas chimes from the church tower near. He beats time to the Christmas tune they play and before they are through he runs to the window throws it open and leans out. Apparently he sees someone for he shouts.*)

Boy! Hey, Lad! B-O-Y!

(*A distant Boy's voice answers.*)

BOY'S VOICE.

Eh?

SCROOGE.

Boy, come here.

(*He beckons.*)

Boy, tell me. What—what day is this?

BOY'S VOICE.

Eh?

SCROOGE.

What day is—

BOY'S VOICE.

Why Christmas day!

(*Disgustedly.*)

SCROOGE.

Christmas day?

(*He closes the window.*)

Christmas day! Why, it *is* Christmas day. I haven't missed it. The spirits have done it all in one night!

(*He takes a sort of half-dance step in joy.*)

They can do anything they like. Of course they can!

(*He takes another step and again the laugh boils over and grows and grows, jolly and healthy and ends in another dance step. Suddenly he stops with one foot off the floor, forgetting, in his new idea, to put it down. Another laugh and he slaps his hands together with.*) I'll do it! I'll do it! It *will* be a joke!

(*Then he runs to the window and opens it again, calling.*)

Hallo, boy. BOY! Hallo, my fine fellow!

BOY'S VOICE.

(*Nonchalantly.*)

Hallo!

SCROOGE.

Do—do you know the poulterer's in the next street but one, at the corner?

BOY'S VOICE.

(*Scornfully.*)

I should *hope* I did.

SCROOGE.
(*To himself joyously.*)

An intelligent boy. A remarkable boy!
(*To boy.*)
Do you know whether they have sold the prize turkey that was hanging there? Not the little prize turkey; the big one?

BOY'S VOICE.
What, the one as big as me?

SCROOGE.
(*Rapturously.*)

What a delightful boy. It's a pleasure to talk to him! Yes, my buck!

BOY'S VOICE.
It's hanging there now.

SCROOGE.
Is it? Go and buy it.

BOY'S VOICE.
(*Mockingly.*)

Walk-e-r!

SCROOGE.
No. No. I'm in earnest. Go and buy it and tell 'em to send it to my clerk's, Bob Cratchit's, in Devor Street. Wait. Here's the address.

(*He takes a card from his pocket and writes on it.*)

Wait! Here's some money, too.

(*He throws the roll of bills with the card out of the window.*)

Come back and I'll give you a shilling. Wait!

(*To himself.*)

I must see Fred.

(*To boy.*)

Here, take this card to my nephew's lodgings.

(*He writes on another and drops it to the boy.*)

It's a bit of a way but I'll give you half a crown if you get him here in half an hour. Now, Merry Christmas, and off with you!

(*He closes the window, and repeats, smilingly.*)

Merry Christmas. That's the first time I've said that in thirty years.

(*He pauses to think again.*)

Yes, I'll send the turkey to Bob Cratchit's. He sha'n't know who sends it.

(*He begins to laugh at the idea.*)

It's twice the size of Tiny Tim. There never was such a joke as sending it to Bob's will be!

(*He now goes to his dresser, gets out his razors, etc., and proceeds to strop the razor, pausing to dance a few steps at every other move. Then he lathers his face, still dancing*

and laughing at his own thoughts and starts to shave. This is a ludicrous operation because of the many interruptions vocal and terpichorean, which almost makes him cut his face more than once. All of a sudden, when but half of his face is shaven, there is a knock at the door. Quite forgetful of his own appearance Scrooge unlocks and opens it, letting in Bob Cratchit. At the sight of his employer, half-shaved, and more fearful still, in an apparently jovial frame of mind, Bob is struck dumb with fear.)

SCROOGE.

(*At sight of Bob he, suddenly remembering his joke, suppresses the half spoken "Merry Christmas" and reassures Bob by a very gruff tone.*)

Mer—well, well, sir?

BOB.

(*Faintly.*)

Good morning, sir. I beg pardon, sir, but you not being at the office, sir, I thought—I feared you might be ill, sir. I beg pardon, sir. I'll go. But you never missed being there before, sir.

SCROOGE.

(*Who has had to turn away to hide his inward laughter.*)

I suppose I may not sleep a little late if I choose, eh?

BOB.

I'm very sorry, sir.

SCROOGE.
(*Sternly.*)

This is Christmas day, sir.

BOB.
(*Frightened.*)

Yes, sir. It's only once a year, sir, and it shall not be repeated, sir.

SCROOGE.

Oh, it sha'n't be repeated, eh? I say it shall, sir. And I tell you what, my friend, I am not going to stand this sort of thing any longer. Your pay and your work are out of all proportion and therefore, sir—

(*He here reduces Bob to hysteria by digging him in the ribs most jovially.*)

Therefore, sir, I am going to raise your salary!

(*Bob at once retreats and looks around him for a weapon of defense. Scrooge with a slap on the shoulder follows him, not seeing that Bob thinks him out of his mind.*)

A Merry Christmas, Bob! A Merry Christmas, my good fellow, merrier than I have given

you for many a year! I'll raise your salary—

(*Bob's knees fairly knock together.*)

and I'll endeavor to assist your family and we will talk over your affairs this very afternoon over a Christmas bowl of smoking Bishop, Bob!

BOB.

(*Aside.*)

Oh, Lord! He's quite mad.

SCROOGE.

What do you say, Bob!

BOB.

(*Wan and weak.*)

Oh, yes, sir. Certainly, to be sure, sir.

(*Suddenly in great solicitation.*)

Can I do anything for you, sir?

(*He is thinking of a doctor.*)

SCROOGE.

Yes, go and get your wife and Tiny Tim and bring them here—

BOB.

(*In fresh alarm.*)

Oh Lord!

SCROOGE.

Whatever's the matter with you, man? Do you think I don't know what I'm doing?

BOB.
(*Earnestly.*)

Oh, yes, sir—I—I mean, no, sir.

SCROOGE.
(*With a kindly twinkle in his eye.*)

Well, perhaps it does seem a little sudden to you, Bob. But I am a different man this blessed Christmas day, thanks to the Christmas spirits. But go and bring your family. You shall know the reason for it all when you get back. But just remember this, Bob, your salary is raised. Now off with you!

BOB.

(*Having looked long into Scrooge's eyes with growing wonder and emotion, now backs wonderingly toward the door. Suddenly his face begins to work and then he turns, leans against the doorpost and burying his face in his arms, bursts into tears. Scrooge stops, looks and then wipes his own eyes. When Bob can speak he says tearfully.*)

It's all right, sir. Only it—it was so sudden —and it—it means so much to—Tiny Tim and to the rest—

(*He dries his eyes.*)

There!

SCROOGE.
(*Huskily.*)

Yes. Yes, I know. I know. Now—off with you.

BOB.
(*Joyfully.*)

Oh, yes, sir!

(*He exits precipitately, Scrooge stands still a moment, suddenly Bob opens the door and says shyly.*)

A—a Merry Christmas, to you, sir!

(*And closes the door softly.*)

SCROOGE.

(*Puts his hand to his eyes, then over his heart as he smiles and whispers.*)

God bless you, Bob Cratchit! You're the first to wish it me.

(*Suddenly.*)

No, I'm forgetting Fred!

(*He stands thoughtful for a moment then his shoulders begin to shake at the joke.*)

Poor Bob, I—I frightened him, almost.

(*He now returns to his shaving and relathers the unshaved side of his face, humming a little out of tune the Christmas air the bells played. When ready to shave again, he takes a little dancing turn about the room and glances*

out of the window in passing. He stops suddenly, saying.)

My friend of the Poor-fund subscription.

(*He pauses then exclaims.*)

Yes. It must be done!

(*And going to the window throws it open again, calling.*)

Ahem! Sir! My very, dear, sir!

(*Making motions as if seen.*)

Yes. Yes, er—could—would you be so good as to come up? Yes, come up, the street door is unlocked. Yes, please. Thank you.

(*He closes the window smiling absent-mindedly, puts more lather on his face, then suddenly remembering the caller on the stairs goes, unmindful of the lather, and opens the door for him.*)

This way, please!

(*The Gentleman who asked the subscription enters, with a rather puzzled look on his face. At sight of Scrooge he starts, as Bob had done and, like Bob, his idea that Scrooge is mad is strengthened by the latter's cordiality.*)

SCROOGE.

(*Holding out his hand.*)

My dear sir. How do you do? I hope you succeeded yesterday. It was very kind of you to come to me.

(*The Gentleman takes his hand but cautiously.*)

A Merry Christmas to you!

GENTLEMAN.

(*Trying to withdraw the hand Scrooge holds.*)

Mr. Scrooge? It can't be—

(*Aside.*)

Mad, undoubtedly.

SCROOGE.

Yes that's my name and I fear it may not be pleasant to you. Allow me to ask your pardon, and will you have the goodness to put down my subscription for—

(*He whispers in the other's ear.*)

GENTLEMAN.

(*Convinced by this fresh proof of insanity.*)

Lord bless me! My dear Mr. Scrooge, pray don't excite yourself—

SCROOGE.

(*Quite unconscious of aught save his idea.*)

If you please. Not a cent less. A great many back payments are included in it, I assure you. Will you do me that favor?

GENTLEMAN.

(*Pityingly.*)

My dear sir, I don't know what to say—

SCROOGE.

Don't say a word, please. But—come and see me tomorrow. You will come?

GENTLEMAN.

(*Retreating to the door.*)

I—I will—yes—I will—but—

SCROOGE.

(*Gratefully.*)

Thankee. I'm much obliged to you! I thank you a thousand times!

(*He again shakes the unwilling hand of the other.*)

Bless you!

GENTLEMAN.

(*Withdrawing his hand and getting outside the door.*)

Yes. Yes, thank you.

(*He exits hurriedly.*)

SCROOGE.

(*Chuckling.*)

That was better. And now—

(*Suddenly he realizes how he must have looked and goes to the glass for confirmation. He fairly shouts with glee at the apparition he sees.*)

Ha! Ha! Ha! Well, well to be sure. The poor gentleman must have thought me out of

my senses, but never mind, he knows something of more importance than my looks.

(*He now finishes his toilet as quickly as the dancing and singing and laughter with which he intersperses the operation will allow, ties his cravat jauntily, chuckling at its festive looks, gets on his coat and at last his hat and after a look around the bare room goes out to the tune of his own singing. There is a pause which is broken by distant voices and laughter and these come nearer until they are heard outside the window and then on the stairs. The laughter stops and there is a knock.*)

FRED.
(*Outside the door.*)

Be quiet!

(*A pause.*)

No answer. It certainly did look like him as he turned the corner.

(*Another knock.*)

He doesn't answer.

NELL'S VOICE.
(*Outside.*)

Knock once more.

(*Again the knock and pause.*)

FRED.

I'll just try the door.

(*He opens the door and looks in.*)

Wait a moment.

(*He enters and looks about him.*)

No, he's not here. What can it mean?

(*Takes the card from his pocket.*)

The card says "Come at once." His own hand, too.

(*He opens the door wider.*)

Come in, Nell. We had better wait and see if he returns. I'll call down to Topper and Dolly.

(*He goes to the window and opens it, calling down.*)

Hey, Topper, he's gone out and we're going to wait a bit to see if he will come back. You and Dolly had better go on. We'll join you at the church.

TOPPER'S VOICE.

(*Below.*)

No. We'll wait here, a few minutes.

FRED.

Very well.

(*He closes the window.*)

What can it all mean? He never sent for me before.

NELL.

He may need you and perhaps he will be right back.

FRED.

Always putting the best face on everything, aren't you?

NELL.

This is too little to count, but I should hope I *did* do so.

FRED.

Will that make you always see only the best side of me?

NELL.

But you haven't any other side.

FRED.

That is such a pretty speech that I think you deserve a kiss for it.

NELL.

(*Naïvely.*)

They say a fair *exchange* is no robbery. What if I trade with you? Will you take good care of mine?

FRED.

I'll keep it in my heart!

(*She puts up her face and he takes her in his arms and kisses her, after a pause.*)

I believe that will make me live forever!

NELL.

Then we shall live *together.*

FRED.

Ah. Nell, I can't wait a year, twelve long months for you—and even that uncertain. I can't.

NELL.

What can we do, dear? It isn't that I fear poverty. I'd share it with you—

FRED.

Yes, I know.

NELL.

But what you have now it but bare subsistence for one alone. You need it all to keep your strength to fight the battle for existence. If you had me to share it with, and there—there might be others—it would not be right, nor just to you, or to them.

FRED.

Oh, I have spelled that all out a thousand times and I can't find the way to evade it. I wish I could. Sometimes I wish we didn't have a *conscience,* between us.

NELL.

(*Smilingly.*)

Hush, dear!

FRED.

I wonder why some have so much without

effort and some who work have so little. But if there is a way to fight it through I'll find it, for I have inspiration in the thought of you that will make me win both you and fortune.

NELL.

That's more like your own self. And perhaps this call here means some good.

FRED.

You have a wonderfully vivid imagination, Nell. No. There is no hope of good to us from Uncle Scrooge. You and I must work and wait.

(*Steps are heard on the stairs.*)

But here he comes.

(*The door opens after a timid knock but instead of Scrooge, the Gentleman of the poor fund enters, he looks around cautiously.*)

GENTLEMAN.
(*In a low voice.*)

I—I beg your pardon. Is—is he better?

FRED.

Better? Who?

GENTLEMAN.

You are relatives, I presume?

FRED.

Yes, sir. I am Mr. Scrooge's nephew.

GENTLEMAN.

(*Still in subdued tones.*)

Oh, then I beg a thousand pardons for my intrusion. But I thought it best that someone should have charge of him—

FRED and NELL.

What are you speaking of? Who? etc.

GENTLEMAN.

Of Mr. Scrooge. Don't tell me he has escaped.

FRED.

Escaped? Why he has gone. But what of it?

GENTLEMAN.

I—I am very sorry to have to be the giver of such bad news but—but as I was passing here this morning, just a little while ago, Mr. Scrooge called me up here and, sir, he was in a very sorry state.

(*He taps his forehead significantly.*)

NELL.

Oh!

FRED.

What, do you mean—

GENTLEMAN.

Yes. He was clearly out of his mind. Half his face was shaven, the rest covered with the lather and then—

(*Mysteriously.*)

He was—so—friendly.

FRED.

Friendly? There must be something wrong then.

GENTLEMAN.

Yes, but more than that. He actually asked me to please accept his subscription to our poor fund.

FRED.

A subscription! Incredible!

GENTLEMAN.

Yes, but the most astounding thing of all, the amount was so large.

FRED.

A *large* subscription?

GENTLEMAN.

Five hundred pounds.

FRED.

(*Fairly staggering at the thought.*)

Five hundred pounds? Poor old Uncle Scrooge. But what is to be done?

GENTLEMAN.

I stopped at my own physician's house and he will soon be here.

FRED.

Thank you, sir.

(*To Nell.*)

I had better tell Topper and Dolly.

(*He goes to window, opens it and calls.*)

Topper! Dolly! Come up here, at once!

TOPPER'S VOICE.

(*On the stairs.*)

Something must be wrong.

(*He enters.*)

What is it?

FRED.

This gentleman has just been telling us that Uncle Scrooge called him up here this morning and offered—mind you actually *offered*—to give him £500!

TOPPER.

(*Promptly.*)

The gentleman is undoubtedly crazy.

FRED.

No. But Uncle Scrooge is.

(*To Gentleman.*)

You say he seemed friendly? Not sour or gruff at all?

GENTLEMAN.

No, on the contrary, very—well—jolly.

OMNES.

Jolly. Uncle Scrooge *jolly!*

GENTLEMAN.

He even asked me to come and see him.

(*Fred looks meaningly at Topper, Topper at Dolly, Dolly at Nell and Nell at the Gentleman. All shake their heads.*)

FRED.

Hark. There is someone on the stairs.

(*Dolly runs to Topper and Nell takes hold of Fred's hand. There are voices outside, then Bob Cratchit's.*)

BOB.

The door is partly open. Come, one more step and we are there.

FRED.

His clerk, Bob Cratchit.

(*Bob appears at the door carrying Tiny Tim. Mrs. Cratchit and the other Cratchits are behind him.*)

BOB.

(*Cheerily.*)

Mister Fred. I beg pardon, sir, but—

(*Looking around.*)

Why, where's your uncle?

FRED.

(*Solemnly.*)

Gone.

BOB.

Gone? Where?

GENTLEMAN.

We don't know.

BOB

(*Recognizing him.*)

Oh, good morning, sir, and a Merry Christmas to you and to all of you!

FRED.

Thank you. Come in, Cratchit.

(*Seeing the others.*)

And this is the Cratchit family?

(*Kindly.*)

BOB.

Yes, sir. Mrs. Cratchit and the children. Mr. Scrooge told me to bring them all here.

FRED.

You say that Uncle Scrooge told you to bring them all here?

BOB.

(*Wonderingly.*)

Yes, sir.

(*Again Fred looks meaningly at Topper, Topper at Dolly, Dolly at Nell and Nell at the*

Gentleman. Then the look reaches Bob, he asks.)

BOB.

What's the game, sir?

FRED.

What were you to bring them here for?

BOB.

Lord bless you, sir, I don't know.

(*Again the look passes around.*)

What is it, sir?

FRED.

What else did Uncle Scrooge say to you?

BOB.

He said he'd raise my salary.

(*Topper whistles loudly. All the rest look serious.*)

What *is* it, sir?

(*Bob is almost tearful by now.*)

FRED.

Did he act strangely, Cratchit?

BOB.

Oh, yes, sir.

(*Laughing.*)

I was frightened at first.

(*All come to listen.*)

And I was for getting the poker to protect myself.

(*The Girls shiver.*)

But when he saw it, he told me very kindly that he was not the same man and—and something about Christmas Spirits.

(*All exclaim "spirits."*)

FRED.

Do you mean that he had been drinking, Cratchit?

BOB.

Lord bless you, no, sir. He said *Christmas* spirits.

TINY TIM.

(Who is having his muffler taken off at the back, standing on a chair.)

What is the Christmas Spirit, mother?

FRED.

You—you didn't think Uncle Scrooge was out of his head, did you?

BOB.

Well, yes, sir, just for a minute I did. But he wasn't, sir. I don't know what it is, but when I wished him a Merry Christmas—I saw—tears in his eyes.

FRED.

It must be something other than—suppose

the spell of Christmas really has reached his poor old hard heart.

NELL.

Stranger things than that have come to pass.

TOPPER.

But—where has he gone?

FRED.

True, where has he gone! That in itself is strange.

TINY TIM.

(*At the window at back.*)

Father.

BOB.

Yes, Tiny Tim.

TINY TIM.

I see a Christmas tree. It's walking.

(*All laugh.*)

It's coming in the door of this house.

MRS. CRATCHIT.

Whatever does the child mean?

FRED.

Someone is on the stairs.

TINY TIM.

It is the Christmas spirit perhaps.

(*The door opens wide, and there stands Mr.*

Scrooge himself; but so loaded down and buried beneath the load of Christmas greens that he carries, as really to look like a tree. He stops almost timidly in the door and looks about the group. Then a little smile steals over his face and he says quietly, but as if from a full heart.)

SCROOGE.

A Merry Christmas to you, all of you!

(*In an instant he is surrounded and is being dragged into the room and helped to get rid of his burden of green.*)

FRED.

(*When there is a pause.*)

Is it really you, Uncle Scrooge?

SCROOGE.

Yes, and no, Fred, my boy. I'm Ebenezer Scrooge but a different Ebenezer Scrooge from he of yesterday. But come, all of you, help me to make this bare bleak *old* Ebenezer Scrooge's room look as if it belonged to the *new* Ebenezer Scrooge and to Christmas, and then maybe I'll tell you all about it.

(*In an instant they are all at work and the room is soon transformed into a veritable bower of green. Just as they are putting up the last wreaths, two men stagger in with a huge Christmas tree which completes the decoration.*

Scrooge has worked too, and has hammered his fingers cheerfully and happily. Now he comes C. and surveys it all with a beaming face.)

FRED.

(*Coming down beside him.*)

And now, your promise, tell us how it all happened.

(*All gather round with "Yes, tell us now."*)

SCROOGE.

(*With a twinkle in his eyes.*)

Well, Fred, Old Marley began it.

FRED and BOB.

Old Marley? Why Old Marley's dead.

SCROOGE.

Yes . . . Marley is dead to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that. The register of his burial was signed by the Clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker and the chief mourner.

(*Indicating himself.*)

And Scrooge's name is good upon change for anything he chooses to put his hand to.

(*Smiling.*)

Old Marley is dead as a door nail. Mind, *I* don't know what there is so particularly dead about a door nail but the wisdom of our ancestors is in the simile and my unhallowed hands shall not touch it, or the country's done

for! Marley is dead to begin with. That must be distinctly understood or nothing wonderful can come of what I am to relate.

FRED.

Why, nobody doubts that, Uncle Scrooge.

SCROOGE.

No? But if I tell you that I saw and talked with him last night?

ALL

(*Exclaim.*)

You saw Marley, etc . . .

SCROOGE.

As I live. Marley and the Spirits of Christmas too, Past, Present and Future, and what they told me, and what they showed me I'll tell you before a dozen Christmas fires that are to come!

TOPPER.

Hurrah for Mr. Scrooge!

ALL.

Mr. Scrooge! Mr. Scrooge!

SCROOGE.

I've told Bob Cratchit what the Spirits taught me in regard to *his* affairs; and tomorrow we will have a new sign for the office, for *you* shall be—

(*To Fred.*)
the partner of my old age, in Marley's place.
(*Pinching Nell's cheek.*)
Does that mean aught to you?

TINY TIM.
(*Coming down to him.*)
Then you do believe in Christmas?

SCROOGE.
(*Picking him up.*)
Take me home to Christmas dinner with you and see! And—may it be said of Scrooge from this day, that he knows how to keep Christmas if ever any man alive possesses the knowledge!

TINY TIM.
And so God Bless us. Every One!
(*Amid shouts of congratulations and laughter and good wishes, falls the*)

CURTAIN

DATE DUE

Date Due

JAN 12 '49			
MAY 4 1950			
MAY 4 1951			
MAY 21 1951			
MAY 28 1951			

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Miller, Ashley

AUTHOR

Mr. Scrooge

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